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RUSSIA-

Democracy or Dictatorship?

By

NORMAN THOMAS

and

JOEL SEIDMAN



25 cents

L. I. D.
PAMPHLET
S E R I E S

LEAGUE FOR
INDUSTRIAL
DEMOCRACY

112 EAST 19th STREET
NEW YORK CITY

RUSSIA—

Democracy or Dictatorship?

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FOREWORD

The League for Industrial Democracy offers this pamphlet as a factual contribution to the discussion of trends toward democracy and dictatorship in Soviet Russia. The L.I.D. did not choose the subject; rather it was forced upon it by those who did not agree with the position taken by Norman Thomas on the Soviet regime in an earlier pamphlet, quotations from which follow this foreword. The original intention was to publish two papers within the same covers—one the present essay, and the other an essay by an author more sympathetic to the present Soviet government. That author finally withdrew from the project, and for almost a year publication has been delayed in the hope that another author might be obtained in his place.

Among those who have been invited to present the other side of this controversial subject are Maxwell Stewart, Corliss Lamont, Robert Dunn, Mary Van Kleeck, Jessica Smith, and Earl Browder. For various reasons, none of those approached felt able to undertake the task. Several months ago Earl Browder was invited to suggest another author, if he could not participate himself. No such suggestion has yet come from him. However, if a competent manuscript is received within three months from this publication date from one who disagrees with the findings here presented, the L.I.D. will gladly publish it, reproducing the present manuscript at the same time so that readers may have both points of view within the same covers.

The League believes that an experiment as important to the world as is that in Russia should be carefully examined, especially with regard to the interrelations between collectivism and freedom. Lessons learned from Soviet experience may help determine the future tactics of those who believe in social ownership; it is in an effort to help provide a basis for such judgments that this study is offered.

This pamphlet was written when the Soviet Union led the world in its denunciations of fascism, when it was appealing to the democratic countries to join with it in concerted action to check fascist

aggression. Long after the pamphlet had been completed, the democracies were shocked to see Soviet Russia enter into a partnership with Nazi Germany, in the course of which conquered Poland was divided between them. Adopting Hitler's technique of demanding instant concessions from small and weak states under the threat of mass force, Stalin in rapid succession reduced Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to virtual dependencies of the U.S.S.R. As these pages go to press, other demands are being made on Finland, and Rumania fears her turn may be next. The emergence of Bolshevik imperialism, reversing everything previously said by the heads of the U.S.S.R., can be understood only in the light of internal developments. The information presented in the following pages will help explain how the Soviet regime could make such a startling reversal of foreign policy without any voice being raised in opposition.

The socialist ideal is a society of free citizens planning for themselves, and not a society of regimented laborers, however well-fed. Fascism, as well as socialism or communism, can end illiteracy, reduce unemployment, and build industrial plants. Human welfare must always be foremost in importance if a society is to be of value; freedom must be an immediate objective and a method as well as a stated ultimate goal. It is essential to the triumph of socialism that it should prove itself able to detect and correct any crimes committed in its name.

The authors will be the first to insist that ideal democracy exists nowhere, and certainly not in the United States, with its unemployment and labor injunctions, its treatment of Negroes and sharecroppers, and its many other problems. They will be the first to admit, likewise, that the U.S.S.R. should be examined and judged, not by American standards, but in the light of Russian history and conditions. It must also be admitted that democracy everywhere is more limited during war than in times of peace, and that the Soviet leaders, living for many years in almost constant fear of attack, had a war psychology long before hostilities began.

These considerations, however, scarcely explain the fear of reprisal on friends and relatives in Russia manifested by some of those who gave the authors information. These persons, willing enough to place all their information at the authors' disposal, cautioned the writers

of this pamphlet not to use their names nor to publish any fact which might cause their identity to be traced. If their identity were learned, they declared, friends in Russia might get into trouble, especially if they were thought to be the source of the information. Several cautioned, moreover, that members of their families in Russia might be punished for any uncomplimentary fact published here and traced to them. Calvin B. Hoover, author of *The Economic Life of Soviet Russia*, wrote in a letter to the authors in February, 1939, that "Documentation of deprivation of liberty is extraordinarily difficult. Quotations of individuals who make complaints would be equivalent to signing as many individual death warrants."

Recognizing the many difficulties in the way of obtaining complete information about Russia, the authors have availed themselves of the generous assistance of persons who qualified as Russian experts by virtue of long residence in that land, both under Czarism and under the Soviets, and by careful and regular study of the Soviet press. The authors have checked and rechecked, as carefully as obvious limitations permitted, every statement that has found a place in this pamphlet, and they have carefully examined critical comments of some who disagree sharply with their conclusions. Despite their care, they recognize that some error or errors of fact, omission, or interpretation may have crept in. Though some detail here or there may be shown in need of modification, however, they believe that the picture they present is an accurate one.

As in the case of all its publications, the L.I.D. carefully selects the authors of various studies on the basis of their fields of interest, judgment, analytical ability and experience. The studies written by the various authors are not designed to express the collective opinion of an organization of free inquiry like the League, but the considered judgment of the authors themselves. The L.I.D. is happy to present this thoughtful and valuable contribution to this highly controversial subject, to help its members and friends appraise and understand developments in the land which today is casting its shadow increasingly over the eastern and western world.

RUSSIA —

Democracy or Dictatorship?

IN ANY discussion of conditions in Soviet Russia, the backwardness of the country under the Czars must be borne in mind. Under the Czars, there was widespread poverty and exploitation, illiteracy and superstition, autocracy and mismanagement. The people possessed few rights of any sort. Agriculture was primitive, industry backward, and transportation poor. The revolution did not occur until after a long and costly war; after the Soviet regime was established it had to defend itself against a ring of counter-revolutionary armies, operating with the aid of various capitalist governments. When peace was at last achieved, the country was exhausted and its resources wasted and spent.

Unquestionably a vast amount has been achieved within a comparatively short space of time. A primitive agricultural society is being transformed into a modern industrial nation. Greater production has been achieved, and the basis laid for a higher living standard in the future. Unemployment has been eliminated, and some measure of general economic security provided. A huge increase in literacy has been attained, higher education encouraged, science fostered, and health service vastly improved. Scientists, musicians, and artists enjoy economic security, free from the whims of wealthy patrons. The persecution of national or racial minorities has been stopped, and the national minorities placed on a level of equality with the Russians. Race or color has been made no bar to high office; women have been raised legally to a level of equality with men. The worker is honored, and a privileged class based on ownership or birth no longer exists. Above all, Soviet Russia has demonstrated that the private capitalist is not necessary to production, that government ownership does work, that national planning is of enormous value.

All these aspects of Russian life are important and deserve careful study. So do other aspects, such as recent foreign policy, that make less pleasant reading. Attention is here centered, however, upon but one subject, democracy, and only material pertinent to that has been included. Democracy is treated in a very broad sense, however, and

“ . . . The resemblances between communism today in action in Russia, German nazism and Italian fascism, are uncomfortably close. Those resemblances arise primarily . . . from the acceptance of dictatorship and the monstrous doctrine and practice of the totalitarian state. The type of dictatorship which both communism and fascism accept rests upon the exclusive right of one party to political power and even to existence. Both dictatorships, because they are dictatorial, practice in its most extreme form the doctrine that the end justifies the means—however cruel those means may be. The end, in cold fact, is the preservation of their own power. Both types of dictatorship are under the same compulsion to popularize their rule and both do it in the name of the mass which is everything while the individual is nothing. In the fascist countries the mass which is holy is the nation—in Germany the ‘Aryan’ part of the nation. In the U.S.S.R., although in practice nationalism has become very strong, in theory the mass which is holy is the working class irrespective of national and racial lines. This is at least a finer, more humane and inclusive conception than Hitler’s tribal nationalism. . . .

“ . . . It is . . . a lamentable fact that . . . a moral identity [between the communist and fascist states] may develop despite the bitter hostility of Stalin and Hitler. This would happen if the socialist totalitarian state in Russia should move more and more to the right, with an increasing stratification of social groups, and at the same time the nazi totalitarian state in Germany, should turn somewhat to the left, with a still further reduction of the powers of an owning class. This fate can be avoided in Russia, but only by a reversal of the present trend of bureaucracy in the direction of a more genuine democracy than the curious travesty of it which Stalin acclaims.”

[NORMAN THOMAS in *Democracy versus Dictatorship*, pp. 11-12, 19. This quotation aroused the controversy leading to the fuller study that follows.]

an effort made to discover to what degree it exists in the various departments of Soviet life.

What are the facts? Is the Russian state governed, as Stalin asserted in his report on the new Soviet constitution, according to "the only thoroughly democratic constitution in the world,"¹ or is it in fact a totalitarian state, though a non-fascist one, that crushes independent thought? Are the Russian masses breaking old chains or are new ones being forged for them? Precisely what may a Russian worker or peasant do without losing his job or landing in jail? Is the terror increasing or diminishing, and is it an instrument of class or of personal rule? These are some of the questions that this pamphlet will try to answer, insofar as the accurate answers may be found.

Socialists, Dictatorship, and Freedom

IN THE hectic days of 1917 the two successive revolutions in Russia inspired millions throughout the world who believed in a cooperative commonwealth and a workers' world. The American socialist movement, as did others, hoped that Russia would soon develop into a democratic socialist state, and be a living proof of the doctrine that under socialism the poverty and insecurity and slavery of capitalism would be abolished, the human spirit freed, and a rich and happy life the lot of all. They hoped that at least the masses, free from the chains of wage-slavery, would own their own country and rule their own destinies.

Earlier, it is true, Marx and Engels had written about the dictatorship of the proletariat as the ruling force in the transition period. But that was before the masses of workers and peasants had won the franchise; and in any event Marx and Engels conceived of that dictatorship in no narrow sense, but as a replacement of the rule of kings and capitalists with the broad rule of a free working class. As soon as the entire population had come to consist of productive workers, the fullest democracy would prevail. In no sense did Marx and Engels conceive of a dictatorship by one party over the proletariat, nor of a reduction in the rights that the average worker had possessed under capitalism or in the transition period.

Lenin, the great leader of the October revolution, likewise conceived of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a means of increasing the rights of workers, while only exploiters lost liberties. "Together with

an immense expansion of democracy," he wrote in his *State and Revolution*, "which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the rich folk, the dictatorship of the proletariat produces a series of restrictions of liberty in the case of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists."² It was later in this sense that he was to assert that "The Soviet state is a thousand times more democratic than the most democratic bourgeois republic." Yet Lenin felt that the dictatorship of the proletariat, even as conceived by him, did not represent freedom or democracy, and that these were impossible so long as an organized state existed. "Only in Communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has been completely broken, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e., there is no difference between the members of society in their relation to the social means of production), only then 'the state ceases to exist,' and 'it becomes possible to speak of freedom.'"³

By 1938 the official theory of the state had been changed. In November of that year *Bolshevik*, the bi-monthly organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, asserted that the Soviet Union would have to maintain a strong state apparatus, with a strong professional army and police force, until the present leading capitalist states became socialist. This change in line was indicated also in Joseph Stalin's letter to a Soviet youth in the preceding February.

With the rise of fascism, democracy has been in retreat throughout much of the world. Any increase in democratic rights in Soviet Russia in recent years or in the present period would be of tremendous significance to opponents of fascism, and especially to believers in a cooperative commonwealth. The industrial progress under the five-year plans in the Soviet Union while the capitalist world was in the throes of its worst depression helped enormously to popularize the idea of a planned economy under government ownership. If it could be shown that a planned economy under government ownership at the same time increased the rights and liberties of the masses, then indeed a stirring challenge would be presented to the entire world.

In his report on the new Soviet constitution, delivered November 25, 1936, Stalin declared that "the complete victory of the socialist system in all spheres of the national economy is now a fact." The U.S.S.R., he said, knew neither crises nor unemployment, neither pov-

erty nor ruin; its citizens were given every possibility to live prosperous and cultured lives. No possibility of exploiting the workers existed, since they possessed the means of production and the capitalist class had been liquidated. Defining socialism as the state of society in which each contributed according to his ability and received according to his deeds, whereas under the higher phase of communism each received according to his needs, Stalin asserted that the Soviets had achieved socialism and were proceeding along the path to the higher phase of communism.

Stalin praised what he termed the "consistent and fully sustained democracy" of the new Soviet constitution. From the point of view of democracy, he declared, bourgeois constitutions might be divided into two groups. One group openly denied democratic rights, whereas the other proclaimed them in principle but utterly mutilated them by reservations and restrictions.

"Democracy in capitalist countries [Stalin went on] where there are antagonistic classes is in the last analysis the democracy for the strong; democracy for the propertied minority. Democracy in the U.S.S.R., on the contrary, is democracy for all. But from this it follows that the principles of democracy are violated not by the draft of the new constitution of the U.S.S.R. but by the bourgeois constitutions.

"That is why I think that the constitution of the U.S.S.R. is the only thoroughly democratic constitution in the world."

Yet almost in the same breath Stalin said, "I must admit the draft of the new constitution really does leave in force the regime of the dictatorship of the working class, and also leaves unchanged the present leading position of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R."'

The Trend in Civil Rights

IN NOVEMBER, 1917, the Bolsheviks had overthrown the Kerensky government in the name of the All-Russian Soviet Congress, which was about to meet and which merely ratified the seizure of power. The Soviet Congress was the most democratic and nationally representative body then existing in Russia; had the Bolshevik slogan, "All Power to the Soviets," been realized in practice, a substantial increase in democracy would have resulted, and the soviets or councils of

workers' and soldiers' deputies would have developed into real organs of democratic government. With the outlawry of all rival parties, however, and the suppression of the rights of free speech, press, assembly, and organization, the Bolsheviks were able to manipulate the soviets without difficulty. From that time until the present the soviets have been largely figureheads, most of whose real decisions have been made for them in advance in the Bolshevik caucus or by high party officials. Since then the Bolsheviks—or communists, as they soon began to call themselves—have enjoyed a monopoly of political organization within the U.S.S.R., and the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party has been the real government of Russia.

Upon taking power the Bolsheviks had suppressed the middle-class parties as counter-revolutionary. At first it was only these remnants and supporters of the old regime—largely monarchists, landlords, capitalists—who were victims of the Red terror. That terror, indeed, was in large measure a reply to the White terror exercised by counter-revolutionary military forces in those portions of Russia under their control. Within the revolutionary framework of the soviets a number of parties still lived and functioned. When the civil war and intervention peril was at its height, the central executive committee of the soviets included Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, anarchists, Maximalists, and Left Social Revolutionaries. In both the soviets and the unions these political parties strove for power and influence. Before the civil wars ended, however, the Bolsheviks, on one pretext or another, had suppressed each of the rival parties. The right-wing Social Revolutionaries, to which Kerensky belonged, and the Mensheviks were soon outlawed. In the summer of 1918 the Left Social Revolutionaries, long allies of the Bolsheviks, were crushed after some of their members had sought to overthrow the Bolshevik government.

Thousands of members of the outlawed parties soon populated the jails of the U.S.S.R. Some of them were guilty of acts of violence or of participation in military activities against the Bolsheviks. The remainder were guilty only of engaging in ordinary political activity. They were anti-Bolshevik but not anti-Soviet, though the Bolsheviks recognized no such distinction. Lenin had long been an advocate of democracy; once in power, however, his attitude changed, and everything else was subordinated to the retention of power.

Even after the Bolsheviks had assumed power in Russia they re-

ceived only minority support. In the elections for the Constituent Assembly, ordered by Kerensky but held in November, 1917, after the Bolshevik revolution, the Social Revolutionaries, the traditional party of the peasantry, polled 16,000,000 votes to only 9,000,000 for the Bolsheviks. The Assembly was permitted to meet in January, 1918, but in view of its anti-Bolshevik majority it was dissolved the following day.

Within the Communist Party a limited measure of freedom of discussion was still allowed, though members were subject to a rigid discipline at the hands of the Central Committee. Lenin, who dominated the party until his death, had usually been intolerant of opposition. He had appreciated the contributions of those who disagreed with him, however, and had given some of them positions of the highest importance. From time to time Lenin's views were vigorously opposed within the Central Committee by other leading members of the party, though Lenin's ability and enormous prestige assured victory for his proposals. Within the Bolshevik Party, even before Lenin died, a sharp struggle for control had begun. That struggle ended in 1929, long after the Soviet regime had solidly established itself, with the expulsion of both the right and the left opposition to Stalin, the arrest and imprisonment or exile of many thousands of opposition communists, and the crushing of internal democracy within the party. First the remnants of the old regime lost their civil rights and were subjected to the terror; then the other revolutionary and working class parties suffered a similar fate; and finally minority tendencies within the Communist Party likewise lost their rights.

From that time Stalin has been the undisputed master of Soviet Russia. The forms of party decisions and popular elections might remain, but no longer do any communists, except those most highly placed, dare to discuss a fundamental question within the party organization; indeed few Russians, whether party members or not, who disagree with the party line are likely to discuss fundamental issues at any place or time. He who dares is likely soon to be a guest of the secret police.

It was under the first five-year plan, tragically enough, that the liberties of the people were curtailed to a degree never before approached under the Soviets. Indeed, in certain important respects, the people had fewer rights than under the Czars.⁸ It was in 1932

that large areas of Russia were gripped by a famine that was due, not to any great degree to weather conditions, but primarily to governmental policies and the opposition these policies aroused among the peasantry. Even worse was the governmental refusal to admit that a famine existed, so that no relief could be obtained from other countries.

In August, 1932, the death penalty was imposed for the theft of any collective property, however small—and this in a state where any property, except that in the hands of the ultimate consumer, was likely to be owned collectively.⁹ Any form of sabotage, likewise, was punished with death, and sabotage came to include acts that in other countries might be termed mere carelessness or errors in judgment. In November, 1932, any unjustified absence from work was made punishable with discharge—when discharge meant likewise the loss of bread cards for the worker and his family in a famine year, and perhaps the loss of lodgings as well. Since there was a shortage of labor, however, other employment could usually be obtained without very great difficulty unless political opposition was suspected. Early in 1933 the system of internal passports, joyously abolished by the revolution, was reintroduced. Until this time the communists had denounced the Czarist passport system as “an instrument of police oppression of the toiling masses.” The population of concentration camps shot upward to dizzy figures, and soon a long series of mass demonstration trials began.

Just when the restrictions were being raised somewhat, Kirov was assassinated by a young communist, and a new wave of official terror swept the country. Executions by the hundreds, arrests by the thousands and tens of thousands. This time it was the Communist Party membership that suffered, and the party rolls were combed for those who differed with Stalin or who might have ever differed with him. The Society of Old Bolsheviks—the fighters in the heroic illegal period of the party—was dissolved. Bolshevik leaders of the revolutionary period were defendants in demonstration treason trials, and were executed at the close. Scarcely a leading Bolshevik of that period, save only Trotsky in exile, and Stalin, remained alive and free. The party still controlled the state, but the secret police, answerable only to Stalin, ruled the party by terror.

Finally, in 1936, the new constitution was adopted, with its brave

talk of democracy. In reality little, if anything, was changed. Most of the clauses guaranteeing civil rights were taken from the former constitution;¹⁴ they meant little then, and they mean little more at the present time. Stalin still rules the state, and it remains impossible to differ openly with him on any important subject. Nevertheless, as the terror of the purge was mitigated and the great demonstration trials receded into history, a better atmosphere began to prevail.

Freedom of Speech

ARTICLE 125 of the new Soviet constitution provides that, "in accordance with the interests of the working people, and in order to strengthen the socialist system, the citizens of the U.S.S.R. are guaranteed by law:

- "(a) Freedom of speech;
- "(b) Freedom of the press;
- "(c) Freedom of assembly and meetings;
- "(d) Freedom of street processions and demonstrations.

"These rights of citizens are ensured by placing at the disposal of the working people and their organizations printing shops, supplies of paper, public buildings, the streets, means of communication and other material requisites for the exercise of these rights."

It should be noted that this article is ambiguous. In the United States free speech means, among other things, the right to advocate socialism, anarchism, or any other system of political or economic organization. In the Soviet Union, at the present time, these liberties may be guaranteed only to those whose activities will be "in accordance with the interests of the working class" and who will "strengthen the socialist system." But who is to determine precisely which speeches and activities will strengthen that system, or what the interests of the working class require? At every point differences may arise as to the tactics to be employed to strengthen socialism. The answer is, of course, that the government will determine—and that means Stalin and his close associates. And so, even under the terms of the constitution, the only freedom that remains is freedom to follow the official party line.

This article represents nothing new for the U.S.S.R. The 1918 constitution, the first the Soviet regime possessed, ensured freedom of

speech, press, and assembly to the broad masses of working people. Only the former upper classes were denied such rights. The question of the former ruling groups no longer arises, since the Soviet Union has officially liquidated those classes and thus liberties can be granted to all. Yet it should be noted that in the 1918 days the workers really possessed and exercised the rights listed in their constitution; today, whatever the constitution says, no full civil rights are likely to be enjoyed by the people unless the secret police are abolished. The new constitution therefore represents little or no advance, so far as these important rights are concerned.

To what extent can Russians speak out? The answer is that they can speak, on the subjects that matter, only within the limits prescribed by the party line. The state, its institutions, and Stalin are above criticism. On political issues in the broad sense—including most economic matters, international affairs, and even much of art and science—there can be only one opinion, the official one. Let the government or the party speak on any subject, whether it be education, poetry, or the production of steel, and that opinion must be professed by every Russian who wishes to keep out of trouble. The one who completely accepts Stalinism, needless to say, has perfect freedom, but that is true in any country for those who approve of the government. In Russia there is no freedom of speech for the one who disagrees with important policies decided on by the party. Any significant difference of opinion, whether to the right or left, is branded counter-revolutionary and suppressed. Only voices acceptable to the bureaucracy are heard over the radio.

Of criticism there is a great deal, perhaps more than in any other country. But this criticism is desired by the government, and is always limited to details. A worker may criticize his immediate superior, especially for harming production by inefficiency or bureaucracy, but he cannot safely criticize the top leadership of the party. People are encouraged to criticize others for failing to follow the government's policy with full vigor; what they cannot do is to criticize the policy itself. By forever criticizing the failings of others one may call attention to his own superior zeal and orthodoxy, and so merit promotion. One who fears such an attack may anticipate it by calling public attention to his own shortcomings, at the same time promising better conduct in the future. This performance is known as self-criticism. But

all of this has little in common with true freedom of speech, though it does perform a valuable function in exposing inefficiency and bureaucracy. Of grumbling there is also a great deal, beyond doubt, and an ordinary worker or peasant may indulge in it without punishment unless he is suspected of political opposition.

In 1927, before the party opposition had been suppressed, Roger Baldwin spent some time in Russia. "I found private conversation fairly free," he writes, "once critics were assured of the discretion of the persons with whom they talked." "That is to say, they wanted to be sure that their hearer would not report their words to the authorities, nor repeat them to someone who might. Some oppositionists feared to talk to Baldwin, and others cautioned him not to quote them. Yet he found no such universal fear as marked opponents of Italian fascism, for example. That may merely mean that the Italian police at that time were more efficient than the Russian. Since 1927, according to all accounts, the situation has been reversed; now the Russian secret police are more efficient than the Italian, with the German police their only serious rivals. Moreover, in 1927 one could easily find oppositionists, since opposition within the party was still permitted. Today the known oppositionists are in prison or exile, or in the grave.

A network of government spies and secret agents today covers the country, so that people dare express real criticism only to trusted friends. In every factory, in every shop, in every apartment house these is apt to be someone who will report critical remarks. Indeed, one who hears such remarks and fails to report them will be in trouble himself, should that fact become known. Harold Denny reported in *The New York Times* that "persons have been sent to prison or to exile for some remark, made at a private party, that a secret agent there among the guests construed as disloyal. When the people speak at all of any touchy subjects they speak in whispers."¹⁶

Above all do Russians fear contact with foreigners.¹⁷ Foreigners are watched rather closely and Russians too friendly with them may be under suspicion. Most visitors to the Soviet Union in recent years testify to this effect, for in some cases even old friends have been careful not to see them too often. As a rule only those Russians whose official duties bring them into contact with foreigners care to be seen often with them. In some cases Russians who were too friendly with

foreigners simply disappeared, and the remainder of the population have taken the hint. Russians are frequently afraid to have their names and addresses in a foreigner's notebook, for fear the latter may be arrested and searched. Under the Czars, on the contrary, contact with foreigners was much more free.

Is this picture too harsh? Russia is a huge country and its government is all-powerful. Let it produce, if it can, cases in which citizens spoke out freely in violation of the party line and were not punished for their sin.

Meetings and Organizations

NO ORGANIZATION can be found in the Soviet Union, even for the simplest and most harmless purpose, unless it is officially sanctioned. Only one political party and one set of unions are permitted. No discussion club is allowed except under the auspices of an approved organization. Not even a social or sports club is permitted, save in connection with a union or other approved body. A group of friends may indeed meet socially, it is true, but if they meet too frequently or if the group becomes too large the janitor or someone else is almost certain to notify the police. Meetings of all sorts are always being held, but they are called by authorized officials, and little of importance is said or done except according to instructions. An individual who grumbles against the regime may be tolerated, but if several of them attempted to meet regularly they would be severely punished.

All organizations, including the soviets and trade unions, meet under party control. The party group prepares or approves the agenda, and the decisions that count are usually determined in advance by higher authorities. There is never any difficulty in knowing the party line, for party representatives are there to guide the meeting. One who talks in opposition too often may quickly disappear, and never be heard of again. Genuine discussion is rare and is usually limited to local matters. As late as 1927 Trotsky attempted an independent demonstration, but it was broken up. The authors have been unable to learn of one attempted since then. Even before Stalin obtained power, it should be noted, it meant prison or death to attempt an independent demonstration. What, then, does it mean to say

that "citizens of the U.S.S.R. are guaranteed by law . . . freedom of street processions and demonstrations"?

Again the testimony of Roger Baldwin is interesting. Until 1921, he writes, the Social Democrats and Social Revolutionists maintained their organizations; but "after intervention and civil war ended in 1921, and when the regime could settle down into more stable methods, a carefully organized control was established over all associations and meetings as well as the censorship over printing and publications. None but an approved organization could continue to exist. No public meetings but those officially approved in advance could be held. . . . Even in the Communist Party control of meetings is strict. None is legal unless called by authorized officials."¹⁴ In the words of a writer in *Izvestia*, "There can be no meetings of lunatics, just as there can be no meetings of criminals—monarchists, Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, etc."¹⁵ He might have added that any who opposed Stalin, whether within or outside the Communist Party, automatically became criminals.

The section of the new constitution dealing with the right to organize is instructive. Its wording follows:

"Article 126: In accordance with the interests of the working people, and for the purpose of developing the organized self-expression and political activity of the masses of the people, citizens of the U.S.S.R. are ensured the right to unite in public organizations—trade unions, cooperative associations," youth organizations, sport and defense organizations, cultural, technical, and scientific societies; and the most active and politically conscious citizens from the ranks of the working class and other strata of the working people unite in the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks), which is the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to strengthen and develop the socialist system and which represents the leading nucleus of all organizations of the working people, both social and state."

Does not this section make a joker of most of the rights guaranteed in the constitution? Can real freedom exist if the Communist Party by law is made the leading nucleus of all other organizations? What the constitution does not add is that for the last decade there has been no real freedom within the Communist Party. The Soviet system, then, amounts to this: Russians may unite only in approved

organizations; these can meet only under official call; and in every such organization, by constitutional provision, there is a leading nucleus of members of the Communist Party. The ordinary member may safely vote only for the proposals advanced by or with the approval of the party nucleus, for to vote against very often is to court disaster.

Freedom of the Press

UNDER the Soviets there has been a tremendous outpouring of the printed word, accompanying the rise of literacy. There are now more than 12,000 newspapers in the U.S.S.R., whereas before the World War Russia had but 859. Since the revolution more than six billion books have been published, in 106 languages. The only trouble is that there is a rigid censorship of books, magazines, and newspapers, and that all must conform to the same official line.

The function of the Soviet press is to stimulate the interest and zeal of the reader in communism. It is to propagandize for the party line of the moment, and print such news as the leaders of Russia desire the masses to read. If those leaders do not wish certain facts known they are simply suppressed. Not a word about the famine of 1931-32, for example, was allowed to appear for months, though millions were on the verge of starvation, and large numbers perished.

Albert Rhys Williams, who is most sympathetic to the present Soviet regime, asserts that the Russian press, much more than being a purveyor of news, is an instrument for mobilizing the people's minds and energies for concrete tasks. "On all major issues," Williams writes, "it presents a solid, unserried front. Occasionally its columns are open to hot discussions on moot questions of the day. But when the debate is closed, or any crisis arises, every organ, from the biggest in Moscow down to the tiniest sheet in a mountain village, speaks in a single voice."¹⁶

The press is full of the same type of criticism to which we have already referred. People are encouraged to write to the editors, criticizing lax and corrupt officials, and condemning failures to follow the party line or achieve the party goals. Such complaints are often heeded by the editor and investigated by the proper authorities. Williams estimates that hundreds of Soviet editors have lost their posts

as the result of such complaints, that 50,000 officials have been demoted or jailed, and that over 10,000 communists have been expelled from the party. Many such correspondents have paid with their lives, he points out, for their courage in uncovering abuses.

And yet all of this is what the rulers of the country desire. Let any letter to the editor criticize the general line of the party, and both the correspondent and any editor who dared publish the letter would probably be "liquidated." An editor is held responsible for every line in his paper, whether in news, editorial, or correspondence columns, and the party line is equally reflected in all.

How is the press controlled? Only official or approved bodies may publish papers, and no divergence from governmental and party policy is tolerated. Members of editorial boards are always or virtually always party members, who may forfeit both membership and freedom for any failure to obey party dictates. The government news agency feeds to the editor such information, both from within Russia and from other countries, as the authorities wish the public to receive.

Every book, before it can be published, must bear a permit from the censor. Anything that is deemed contrary to Soviet ideology or contrary to official policy will bar a book.¹⁸ Since the party line is constantly shifting, what is accepted today may be banned tomorrow, and the permit will then be revoked and the book withdrawn. The books of Marx and Marxists could be freely published and sold in Russia under the Czars, but today no book with a divergent interpretation of Marxism is permitted. John Reed's ashes are still buried beside the Kremlin wall, but his book may not be purchased in Russia today, though Lenin himself wrote the introduction. Textbooks on history and economics are frequently withdrawn and changed to conform to the latest shift in official policy. The history of the Russian revolution and of the Bolshevik movement has been completely rewritten in order to magnify Stalin's role and deprecate the achievements of those who later became his enemies.

Until the spring of 1939 news was censored both when entering and leaving the U.S.S.R. Correspondents were not allowed to send out news that the Soviet heads deemed injurious to their cause. The reader in America had to learn to read between the lines, and to make himself sensitive to changes in tone. Sometimes foreign correspondents in Moscow phoned stories to offices of their agencies in other

European countries in order to avoid the censorship. Yet even this was dangerous, for a correspondent thought unfriendly might be expelled or denied reentry if he left for any reason. Written words taken out of Russia were supposed to receive permission from the censors. In May, 1939, censorship of the dispatches of foreign correspondents was abolished, but the writers were warned of possible expulsion if their dispatches were flagrantly hostile or clearly prejudicial to the prestige of the Soviet government.

A few foreign papers, especially communist ones, are sold in the kiosks in the larger cities, though they would scarcely be available in the smaller towns. Too great an interest in foreign publications, however, may make a Russian an object of suspicion. University professors may read foreign papers and magazines at faculty clubs, but they are not permitted to take the papers to their homes. Articles may be copied only with special permits. No resident of the Soviet Union, whether a citizen or a foreigner, may subscribe to foreign periodicals without a special license. The postal authorities are not the only obstacles, for it is extremely difficult to obtain foreign exchange.

Under Czarism, from 1905 to 1917, the press was much more free than it has been under the Soviet regime. Both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks had their own legal publishing houses for books, pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers. Even daily papers were published by revolutionary parties, including the Bolsheviks. The editors were imprisoned from time to time, issues were confiscated and publication suspended for short periods, and the publishers fined, but the papers were nevertheless allowed to continue or resume publication. "The pressure of the censorship was severe," Moissaye J. Olgin, later to become a prominent American communist, wrote in 1917, "yet, notwithstanding all difficulties, the press was speaking a free language, and the readers were gradually receiving political education" [italics in original].¹⁹ Under the Provisional Government, from February to October, 1917, there was greater freedom of press in Russia than at any time before or since. Similarly there was greater freedom of speech and organization.

Under the Soviets, despite the constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press, not even one issue of an opposition paper can appear. Under the constitution, printing shops and supplies of paper are placed "at the disposal of the working people and their organiza-

tions," but in practice the government, which controls every printing press and all paper supplies, permits publication only by officially approved bodies. Not even the simplest duplicating machine may be owned legally by an individual, so that the production of even an illegal circular is extremely difficult, if not virtually impossible. A former professor in a Russian institution of higher learning told the authors of this study that he had to get special permission to duplicate a syllabus for his lectures. It would have been impossible, he says, to have had anything but the approved text duplicated. There are wall newspapers in factories and other enterprises, but there again the editor is almost always a member of the party or of the Comsomol, the communist youth organization.

Freedom of Movement

UNDER the Czars a system of internal passports had enabled the police to keep track of the population. The abolition of that hated system was long counted one of the permanent gains of the revolution. At the end of 1932, however, internal passports were reintroduced.

Why, officially, were the internal passports reintroduced? Official sources spoke of clearing the larger cities, and especially Moscow, of nondescripts without legitimate means of livelihood. Several hundred thousands of "nondescripts" were to be driven out of Moscow alone. *Izvestia* stresses the new regulation as an important act from the point of view of statistics which, it declares, is one of the major requisites of socialist planning. . . . We know little about composition, position and movement of population. The government consequently has no means of influencing movement of population. Passport regulations will alter the situation."²⁰ Undoubtedly the larger cities, especially Moscow, were terribly overcrowded. Another leading motive, beyond doubt, was to reduce the high turnover of labor.

The internal passports were to have a close relationship to housing and employment as well as to travel. Beginning in the larger cities, passport commissions in every neighborhood decided who was to be allowed to remain. The others, refused passports, also forfeited their dwelling space, and were forced to migrate to other areas.²¹ The housing purge was extended from area to area until every desirable part

of the country had been purged. In undesirable areas everyone was allowed to remain. Henceforth domicile was fixed, and a person was not supposed to remain in any other area for more than three days without a special permit. Peasants are normally not given passports. This serves to keep them where they are, since passports are required for residence in a town. Before the revolution, it should be noted, non-Jewish Russians could travel or change their residence freely within Russian boundaries. They carried passports for identification only, so that effective police control was assured.

Under the Soviet regime important railroad stations and through trains are apt to have secret police agents attached to them. In frontier districts especially, passports may be collected on the trains and not returned to the passengers until shortly before they reach their destinations. Political offenders who have finished their terms of imprisonment or exile are frequently given passports which deny them the right to live in a list of specified centers. Foreign correspondents, ordinarily allowed to travel freely, were not permitted to enter the famine areas of 1932-33 until after the fresh crop had been harvested and conditions had vastly improved.²²

Foreigners in Russia are supervised much more carefully than are Soviet citizens. The secret police have a separate section for them. It is the model factory, the model prison, and the model collective farm that they are likely to see under the auspices of Intourist. The interpreter-guides who are assigned to them are schooled in the correct answers. Of course, a foreigner who understands the language may go around alone, observe living conditions, converse privately with those he meets, and draw his own conclusions. If he is trusted not to give away the source of his information he may learn a good deal about conditions, but unless those interviewed know and trust him, it is difficult for him to learn what is actually taking place in many spheres of Russian life. Those who know Russian have had particular difficulty since 1936 in getting visas.

Leaving and Entering the U.S.S.R.

IF internal travel is easy and free compared with the difficulties of obtaining permission to travel abroad. The Soviet citizen is almost never allowed to be a tourist in other countries; for anyone to apply for permission—which would almost cer-

tainly be refused—would simply make of him an object of suspicion. Only those Russians are allowed to visit other countries who are sent on official business of one sort or another. Often their families are not allowed to leave with them, and death may be the penalty for those who fail to return on time.²⁴

The Soviet authorities are equally reluctant to permit their citizens to emigrate to other countries. Under the decree of June 8, 1934, the crossing of the frontier to another country without a passport is punishable by death or ten years of prison for civilians, and death with no exceptions for soldiers. The Soviet border has long been one of the most closely guarded in the world, and those who attempt to cross the border illegally are shot. Adult members of the family of a military deserter who knew of the desertion and failed to inform the authorities are subject to confiscation of their property and imprisonment for from five to ten years; if they did not know of it, they are nevertheless exiled to Siberia for five years.²⁵ Those who apply for permission to emigrate are seldom allowed to go; indeed, it is unwise even to apply, for it raises the suspicion that one is dissatisfied.

Moreover, for many years the fee for a passport to emigrate had to be paid in gold, and it was virtually impossible for a Russian worker to obtain that. During the five-year plan the secret police made a drive to collect all gold in the Soviet Union, whether its possessors had come by it legally or not. What the gold fee really meant was that only those could leave the country whose friends or families abroad would pay from several hundred to a thousand dollars in gold or foreign money. Not even all for whom such sums were available were allowed to leave. No explanation of a refusal was made to the applicant, but to the outside world the refusals were sometimes explained by the need for labor power, and the fear that the emigrants might prove a public burden in their new lands; aged persons were often refused passports, however, even when relatives were able and willing to support them in other lands. Political opponents have not been allowed to leave, even though no employment might be open to them in the U.S.S.R.

The more likely reasons for these policies are that the government fears hostile publicity in the outside world, should any of the dissatisfied leave, and that too large a number would leave if the bars were raised. Even those Russian-born persons who have acquired

other citizenship and returned to visit the Soviet Union are not always permitted to leave, for Soviet law still claims them as citizens. So long as the regime needed foreign exchange, foreigners who married Russian girls were able to purchase exit visas for their wives. Now, however, such visas are seldom issued, and many foreigners have had to leave without their families.²⁶

Earlier well-known political opponents, such as Trotsky and some others, were expelled from the country. Lesser-known opponents were usually imprisoned and not allowed to leave, however, unless great pressure was exerted on their behalf by the international labor movement. In recent years such permission has been virtually impossible to obtain for Russian citizens. Even worse, the Soviet government brought pressure on Norway to force the expulsion of Trotsky, who had been given the right of asylum there.

Under article 129 of the new constitution, the U.S.S.R. grants the right of asylum to foreign citizens who are persecuted for defending the interests of the working class. In practice, however, such refugees are subjected to the same harsh controls that govern the Russians. Indeed, they are likely to be watched by the secret police even more closely. They have fewer defences than other foreigners, for they can expect no assistance from consulate authorities. Victor Serge asserts that foreign political refugees who arrive in the Soviet Union without passing through the channels of the International Red Aid are generally imprisoned as espionage suspects upon their arrival.²⁷ Numerous reports are heard of refugees who have been imprisoned or shot, or who have chosen to return to their native lands, despite the almost certain imprisonment and perhaps death that awaited them there.

What has been the fate of the heroic Schutzbunders who fled to Russia after the liberties of the Austrian workers had been crushed in 1934? Unofficial but fairly reliable reports are that very few are still in the Soviet Union and at liberty, that the vast majority are in jail in Russia, have been expelled, or have voluntarily returned to fascist prisons in their homeland. Only the Soviet government knows the exact fate of the Schutzbunders, and it is preserving a discreet silence.

Some refugees were admitted from Germany in the early years of the Hitler regime, but the authors have been unable to learn of any

—even communists—admitted in 1938-39. Entrance to Russia has been denied the Jewish refugees who roamed the seas in 1938 and 1939,²⁷ though no land could better use their abilities. Those refugees who in earlier times found some sanctuary there are in a great many cases in jail—not, to be sure, as Jews or foreigners, but on suspicion of lacking that absolute loyalty in thought, word, and deed which the Stalinist bureaucracy exacts rigidly of all who live within the portals of the U.S.S.R.

Religion

For the Orthodox Church under the Czars little enough can be said. It represented religious organization at or near its worst. It was an ally of the Czar, lending church sanction to his despotism; it helped to keep the masses in ignorance and superstition; it fought the revolution with all the means at its disposal. Yet one can condemn these actions of a particular clerical hierarchy and at the same time insist on religious freedom as one of the goods of a civilized society.

From its beginning the Soviet government has been uncompromisingly hostile to every form of religious faith. Its tactics in the fight on religion have changed from time to time, but the goal has remained steadfast. "Religion is the opiate of the people" still sums up the official view. The chief agency in the struggle against religion has been the League of Militant Atheists, a voluntary but officially approved organization whose membership in 1932 reached a peak of 5,500,000, organized in 65,000 groups or "cells." Especially on important religious holidays did anti-religious propaganda reach its peak. Throughout the country anti-religious museums flourish. It should be added, however, that in these museums the main attacks are directed against the reactionary character of the old Greek Orthodox Church in Russia, and against old superstitions in which few American churches believe.

The 1918 Soviet constitution guaranteed freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda to everyone. In 1929, however, religious believers were limited to the right of professing their faith, while the right of non-religious propaganda remained. No reply could be made in speech or writing to the ever-present attacks on religion. Religious instruction was forbidden to children under 18 years of age—by

which time, thanks to anti-religious propaganda both within and without the schools, the state hoped that every child would be a confirmed atheist. Large numbers of churches were confiscated and converted into clubs and museums. The remaining churches were forbidden to engage in social or cultural activities, and were obliged to confine themselves to worship. Large numbers of priests were exiled or executed on charges of counter-revolutionary activity, many of the charges doubtless being fully justified. Heavy taxes forced many religious societies out of existence. Those that survived could obtain little paper for publishing Bibles and hymn books; if paper were obtained, services of printers might be refused. Ringing of church bells was forbidden in large cities and the bells were melted to make tractors. No schools to train priests are allowed.²⁸

The new constitution makes no change in the rights of religious practice or propaganda. Article 124 states that "freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda shall be recognized for all citizens." An important improvement, however, has been made in the political status of the clergy. Previous constitutions had disfranchised the clergy; though the loss of the vote itself might have been of little consequence, disfranchised persons had no right to food cards and they and their children suffered other disabilities. For many years the children of a priest could not be admitted to state employment or to the middle or higher schools unless they broke off all connections with him. The present constitution, however, removes these disabilities, and gives all citizens, irrespective of religion, social origin, or past activity, the right to take part in elections of deputies and to be elected. It is even reported that mocking and jeering at religious beliefs has been forbidden.

Nevertheless, it still remains true, in the words of Albert Rhys Williams, that "the social pressure which in other countries induces people to go to church operates in the Soviet Union to keep them away. Organized religion is still in retreat and on the defensive."²⁹ The government hopes that religion will disappear as the old generation dies off. To be known in the Soviet Union today as an active believer in any form of religion is a real test of one's courage, and to be a member of the clergy is to invite arrest on charges of engaging in spying and subversive activities. Especially after widely-observed religious holidays are such arrests likely to be made.

An authoritative article in the organ of the Commissariat of Education in October, 1938, deplored a revival of religious interest among children, and summoned Soviet school teachers to intensive anti-religious work. The teachers were called upon to combat all religions, and direct the hardest blows at whatever religion prevailed in the district. "Teaching must be so conducted," the article declared, "that by the end of his schooling the pupil has a clear understanding that, though religions differ in form, they all in essence lead to the same end, all are ideologies of slavery, all implacably contradict science and all are directed against the interests of toilers."²⁸

Propaganda, Education, and the Arts

ONLY the Hitler regime in Germany matches the Soviet government in its skillful use of propaganda. A constant barrage of propaganda, with no opportunity for counter-propaganda, and ruthless repression for all who object, is the technique for molding the masses to its will. Fascist countries use a similar technique, though their aims are different. Neither Russia, Italy, nor Germany recognizes any important distinction between education and propaganda. Every school and every teacher, along with every publication and all other means for influencing the minds of people, must fit into its part of the totalitarian regime. Literature, art and science, the stage and the screen are likewise agencies for impressing the current doctrine and the current slogan into the minds of the people. "In behalf of this burning, public faith [of communism]," asserts John Dewey, "propaganda and education are more than confounded. They are identified."²⁹ Both children and adults are taught, not to think for themselves, but to believe.

With these limitations, Soviet education has made enormous progress. Illiteracy is fast being wiped out, and higher education is fostered in a manner never dreamt of under the Czars. From pre-school kindergartens to universities, great advances have been registered. Boys and girls, however poor, who show promise may go through a university or technical school, for monthly stipends enable them to meet their expenses while they study. Trouble arises only if political unorthodoxy is shown; if that is the case, expulsion from school is certain, and imprisonment will likely be their lot as well.

Indeed, students have been expelled, not for any fault of their own, but because close relatives have been accused as public enemies.

Teachers have been dismissed, imprisoned, and shot for lack of political orthodoxy just as have other groups in the population. Indeed, the nature of their work subjects teachers to a more careful scrutiny. Party and youth leaders among the students are encouraged to report on their professors' orthodoxy. Particularly in the social sciences is the control rigorous. The assumption is that Marx, Lenin, and Stalin have established the truth in political and philosophical matters. Any divergence in view is punished summarily as treason or "wrecking." The history books have been rewritten several times to conform to the current party line, and to remove all favorable mention of Stalin's later enemies. Whatever the subject, a quotation from Stalin is apt to be the final answer to all argument. Even theories in the natural sciences have political implications. In June, 1939, for example, the Mendelian law in the field of genetics was denounced in the Soviet press, and the concept of the gene repudiated as contrary to Marx's dialectical materialism.

Even those champions of the U.S.S.R., the Webbs, found this stifling political orthodoxy too much for them. They found Soviet thought in danger of reverting to the doctrinal rigidity of the Orthodox Church. "There is, at present," they write, "too frequently an attempt to deal with problems, not by scientific investigation of the facts, but by the application of phrases culled from the writings of Marx and Engels, and now also from those of Lenin and Stalin. Any conclusion in other terms is often, not demonstrated to be scientifically incorrect, but summarily denounced as being either a 'left deviation' or a 'right deviation'; that is to say, as unorthodox."³⁰ On the other hand, scientific inquiry that may help to solve industrial or military problems is encouraged. Scientists in these fields who hold orthodox political views are very well treated.

Teachers have little protection against the local bureaucracy, unless it happens that the local bureaucrats are not trusted by the higher authorities. *Pravda* of February 15, 1938, headlines an article by a leading official of the Commissariat of Education, "Heartless Treatment of Teachers."

"Many leaders of the branches of the Commissariat of People's Education," the article states, "treat the teachers in a bureaucratic,

criminal way. Without any reason, only in order doubly to insure themselves, the careerists in the departments of people's education (sometimes helped by leaders of the local Soviet and party organizations) dismissed honest teachers." Of about 2,000 dismissed teachers whose complaints had been investigated by new personnel, *Pravda* declares, some 1,500 were reinstated. Dismissed teachers may not always be so fortunate, however.

All art is propaganda, say the Soviet leaders—and in their country they have taken pains that this should be true in large measure, and that only art acceptable to them should exist. The early years of revolution and civil war, however, were precisely the years of greatest freedom in the intellectual and artistic spheres. Then came the earliest efforts to control art and science in the interests of the party and the party line. In every realm of thought and expression heresies were diligently searched for and as diligently stamped out. The late Communist Academy conducted lectures on "Bourgeois Tendencies in Architecture and How to Combat Them." Societies of "Marxist Physiologists" and "Marxist Mathematicians" were formed. Organized groups, with unlimited party support, controlled each branch of creative art and thought.

After the murder of Kirov in December, 1934, a fesh heresy hunt, more intensified than any the country had theretofore known, spread through every department of Soviet art, science, and culture. Virtually every branch was purged, and many of the former leaders were denounced as enemies of the people, and their ideas branded counter-revolutionary. On January 28, 1936, *Pravda* denounced Shostakovich, the famous composer, for "leftist stress of ugliness," and for naturalism and formalism. At once in every art, in painting and sculpture, in literature and in architecture, naturalism and formalism were repudiated and attacked—though there was understandable difficulty, until *Pravda* spoke, in knowing just which tendencies were naturalistic and formalistic. In September, 1937, *Pravda* denounced a collection of paintings of the Ukraine for showing mean huts and poorly clad peasants, instead of gay houses and electrical stations of collective farms. "This entire collection," *Pravda* stormed, "cannot be regarded as anything but an insolent sally of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists." In the field of architecture, a design for kitchenless apartments was assailed as a "left deviation." On September 2,

1938, *Izvestia*, the organ of the Soviet government, demanded that Soviet art be purified from "decadent modernistic influences," as well as from the "sticky sweetness of romanticism."

All of this can mean only that there is little freedom of thought or of cultural or artistic expression in the Soviet Union. In every department political considerations control, and artists and scientists must bow to that control or be liquidated. So frightened have the cultural authorities become, as a result, that some of them have been denounced for fearing to make decisions. Thus *Pravda*, on February 13, 1938, denounced the central administration for control of theater repertory as cowardly and illiterate. The theater administration, *Pravda* complained, shelved almost every play dealing with contemporary events. In order to ensure their own safety, the authorities neither authorized nor forbade plays. But who can blame them?

Laws, Penalties, and Secret Police

The legal safeguards of accused persons in western democratic countries have no counterpart in the Soviet Union. There is no protection against arrest, despite clauses in the new constitution guaranteeing inviolability of the person and the home, and freedom from arrest except by order of court or sanction of a state attorney. The difficulty is that the secret police are not bound by these provisions. Article III of the new constitution provides that "cases shall be heard in public unless otherwise provided by law." Herein lies the difficulty, for other provision is made for political offenses, and in the U.S.S.R. almost any offense may be construed as political.

There is no right of *habeas corpus* in Russia, and no right of a citizen to demand a prompt or open trial or a trial by jury. He has no right even to know the charges against him until 24 hours before the trial. He has no right to have witnesses summoned in his behalf, and no right even to have his relatives notified that he is under arrest. He can hire what passes for counsel, but defense lawyers seldom dare to deny charges pressed by the state. At the best in political cases they can merely urge extenuating circumstances, for any real effort to deny the charges or upset the government's case might subject them to denunciation for counter-revolution. Sometimes the defense

lawyers equal or outdo the prosecution in affirming the guilt of their clients. Where several defendants are represented by different counsel, each defense lawyer often bitterly attacks those defendants who are not his clients; the result is to reinforce the case against all. Even in non-political cases it is dangerous to contradict the prosecutor. There are indications that the attitude toward defense counsel is changing, however, and that no longer are persons exercising that function regarded as anti-social.

Soviet treatment of ordinary criminals appears to be most enlightened. They are treated, at least in theory, not as culprits to be punished, but as sick persons to be cured. They are considered victims of a faulty social organization, as social defectives rather than as criminals. The official concern is to fit the offender to take a proper place in society. Punishments are mild, and even for murder the typical penalty would be ten years or less in prison. Indeed, ten years in prison is usually the greatest punishment for any offense except counter-revolution. Soviet trials are noted for the informality of their procedure. There is a right of appeal from the regular lower courts, but none from decisions of the secret police, at least in practice.

When one turns to political offenses, however, the situation becomes entirely changed; and the difficulty is that the term "political offense" has a very wide meaning in the U.S.S.R. To criticize Stalin may be a much more serious offense than to kill a man. Already we have discussed some offenses which bring the death penalty. The penalty is death for stealing state property—in a country where virtually all production is carried on by the state. For saboteurs—and that term is interpreted very broadly indeed—the penalty may be death. "Wrecking" is one of the major crimes in the Soviet Union today. Under Article 58 of the criminal code, one found guilty of "teasing, mocking, or persecuting" a speedy worker may be executed. The same penalty may be given farmers caught secretly grinding their private grain in a mill, since this implies an attempt to cheat the government out of the grain tax; a similar fate may await officers of a cooperative farm who encourage peasants to sow more intensively on their private parcels of land. Death may likewise be the penalty for helping to organize a strike in the lumber industry, manned almost exclusively by exile labor. For attempting to cross the border illegally the penalty may be death. Under a Soviet law of April 7, 1935, chil-

dren over 12 merit the same penalties, except for the death sentence, as adults.³² The authors know of no other country in the world—at least, no other civilized country—which thus treats child offenders. Under the Czars political offenders were treated better than ordinary criminals; under the Soviets they are treated much worse, though perhaps four-fifths of all offenses are political.

Russia has long had a system of secret police, much more hated and much more feared than the regular police. Under the Czars it was the Okhrana; in the early days of Soviet power, the Cheka. More recently it has been the O.G.P.U. (State Political Administration, best known as the Gay-Pay-Oo), which in turn has given way to the current N.K.V.D. or Commissariat of Internal Affairs. It is the same police system, however, with the same personnel in Soviet times—except for those shot as traitors—and with similar methods. It should be noted, however, that the N.K.V.D. performs many other functions as well; here we shall be concerned only with its secret police section.

The N.K.V.D. is a state within a state, with its own police, its own laws, its own courts, and its own army. It is answerable to no one except its head, who in turn is answerable only to the Politburo and Stalin. The secret police are omnipresent, and every important train, every large station, every large factory, every hotel, every town, almost certainly has its agent or agents. The janitor may be a secret informer, and many who have been in trouble may be forced to give information. The worker next to you, the man across the hall—its agents and spies and informers are everywhere. The N.K.V.D. guards the frontier, it administers the internal passport system, it operates prisons and concentration camps, it digs canals and builds roads and cuts down forests.

The secret police take charge of political offenders. Trials are secret except for demonstration purposes. Victims simply disappear, usually by arrest in the middle of the night. Verdicts are purely administrative ones, not concerned with ordinary court procedure, and with no right of the accused to witnesses or counsel. Families do not know the fate of the person thus arrested; if the penalty is exile to the frozen north, the family's first knowledge may be a notice to take warm clothing to a railroad station at a given time. The family may never hear of the penalty. The Menshevik press in Paris asserts that

many political prisoners, exiled to remote areas in Siberia, are forbidden to communicate with relatives or friends.

Prisoners are denied any contact with the outside world during the period of investigation, which takes place in absolute secrecy, and which may last for months or even years. Questioning usually takes place at night. At the expiration of a term it may be extended one or more times by administrative order. After the prisoner is finally released the N.K.V.D. will permanently keep track of him. Frequently the public does not know that a man has been arrested until a newspaper reports that the death penalty has been carried out. There is evidence that, when the government was in desperate need of gold, torture methods were employed to learn its hiding places.³⁰ Officially the secret police may no longer pass summary death sentences, but they continue to do so anyway. The 1938 trial of Yagoda, formerly head of the secret police, showed that almost unbelievable abuses had occurred in the exercise of these vast powers.

Beginning with the liquidation of the "kulaks" in 1930, the secret police found themselves with hordes of prisoners on their hands. Accordingly they became the principal builders of public works in the U.S.S.R. The Baltic-White Sea and the Moscow-Volga canals were built by prison labor, and the Siberian Railway was similarly double-tracked for 2,200 miles. The huge power plant near Kuibishev is to be built in part by prison labor.

John D. Littlepage, long a leading American mining engineer in Soviet Russia, writes that he met kulaks at forced labor all over the eastern districts of Russia—in mines, in factories and forests, and at work on dams, railways, and canals. "There were so many of them," Littlepage writes, "that they converted the federal police into the largest single employers of labor in Russia." In Littlepage's opinion, the liquidation of kulaks was based as much upon the need of unskilled labor in industry as upon the desire to reorganize agriculture. Labor turnover was very high during this period because of poor housing and food shortage. "The police . . . can always count on a steady supply of labor," Littlepage writes, "no matter what kind of living conditions exist where the given task has to be done."³¹

How many convict laborers are thus employed on industrial construction? The government has released no total figures, but when

the White Sea canal was opened, 12,484 of its builders were released, though their terms had not yet expired, and the remaining terms of 59,516 others were shortened.³² Several hundred thousand more must have worked on the Siberian Railway. Lyons' estimate is that two million were assigned to industrial production at the peak. This does not include the probably larger figure of those exiled by the secret police but not used for industrial construction.

Little can be said here about the mass demonstration trials that have attracted the attention of the entire world. From their study of the trials the authors have concluded that they are held primarily for their propaganda effect, rather than to establish the guilt or innocence of the accused. Unless the government were certain of the result there would probably be no open trial at all. The trials may be expected whenever a scapegoat is needed, and an infallible leader needs a scapegoat whenever things go wrong. If production does not reach predicted levels, if food is scarce and living standards low, a mass treason trial may be expected.

The defendants at first were old-regime intellectuals or members of other working class parties; in recent trials they have been oppositionists from within the Communist Party, including many of its leaders in the revolutionary period. Out of the hundreds or thousands of potential defendants in its prisons, the government carefully selects those who will best serve the purpose in hand. The rest are never brought to open trial. Anyone who is thought likely to tell a story not wanted by the government or to refuse to confess will probably be shot or exiled after a secret trial. In none of the mass trials has there been presented thus far any evidence other than the testimony and self-accusations of the defendants. The demonstration trials are carefully staged for public consumption. They should be viewed as theatrical performances staged for their propaganda effect rather than as trials seriously concerned with the guilt or innocence of the defendants.³³ Mass demonstration trials were used before Stalin attained his present dominant position in the U.S.S.R., but under his leadership they have been employed far more extensively than before.

From time to time there are trials of members of the secret police, in a purge of the purgers. In December, 1938, for example, five political police officers of one of the autonomous republics were shot for

extorting confessions of counter-revolutionary activities from innocent persons by criminal means. The means used were not disclosed, but enough such instances have occurred to cast doubt on numerous other confessions obtained by the secret police."³⁶

Employment in the U.S.S.R.

It is in the economic field that Soviet workers are supposed to possess their greatest rights, and certainly considerable progress was made in the earlier stages of the revolution. For some years the Soviet workers, through their unions, exercised considerable control over production. It is now claimed that Soviet unions are the largest in the world; that unemployment has been abolished; that, since the private capitalist has been eliminated, the Russian worker alone can receive the full product of his toil. We shall see which of those claims are true, and to what extent.

There is no difficulty for a worker to get a job in Soviet Russia, unless he is suspected of political unreliability. Until 1929 more than a million unemployed were registered on the labor exchanges, in addition to millions who because of non-proletarian origin were denied state employment. Since then the vast program of industrialization has created a labor shortage, and discrimination due to social origin has been abolished. There is a shortage of labor in the U.S.S.R. today. Wages are indeed low, but everyone who wants a job can get it, provided only that he is not suspected of being an opponent of the regime. Even suspected opponents may be allowed to retain their employment, especially if they possess unusual skill or needed technical knowledge.

For a long time, the turnover of factory labor was huge, with resulting inefficiency. Laws of recent years, including the internal passport, have changed all that. A decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Soviet of People's Commissars, issued November 15, 1932, provides that "in case of so much as one day's failure to appear at work without good reason the worker is subject to: discharge from the enterprise or institution, deprivation of the right to use the food and industrial goods cards given to him as a worker of the given enterprise or institution, and also deprivation of the right to use the quarters granted to him in the houses of the given

enterprise or institution."³⁷ Prior to this time workers could not be discharged unless they were absent three days in a month without good reason. On January 8, 1939, the Moscow radio broadcast a decree ordering the dismissal of any Soviet worker who was more than twenty minutes late. "In January, 1939, industrial executives who had failed to dismiss employees for absence or lateness without good excuses were placed on trial on charges of violating labor discipline."³⁸ It should be noted, however, that labor is scarce in the U.S.S.R., and that it is usually not difficult for a worker thus dismissed to find employment with another state agency.

Late in 1938, the government announced that, beginning January 15, 1939, every enterprise would have to prepare a labor booklet for each manual and office worker, to contain his full employment record. Harold Denny thus describes in *The New York Times* the way in which the new system is to work:

"Each worker must present his booklet when seeking employment and it will be retained by the employing organization until he leaves. Thus it will accompany him throughout his working career like a soldier's service record and by the terms of the decree he cannot get a job without it.

"In each worker's booklet will be written his full name, age, education and vocation. There are spaces for the employing institution to record bonuses or commendations granted to the worker and, most important of all, the reasons for his leaving his job, whether voluntarily or by dismissal. Thus when a worker applies for a job the employing organization will know his record in detail."³⁹

Even before these new decrees were issued, there was a fairly rigid control of labor and employment. A worker could indeed quit his job, but the reason for dismissal or for quitting was inscribed in the old work card, which had to be shown when new employment was sought. This permitted an effective blacklist, since virtually all employment was in the hands of the state and its agencies. At all times, for real or alleged sabotage or political unreliability, the worker could be dismissed; usually, in such cases, he left in the custody of the secret police. The worker can be sent to a job in any part of the country where the government requires his services. Under a decree of December 28, 1938, one month's notice in advance is required from any worker who wishes to give up his employment.

Apologists for the Soviet regime explain all these measures by a lack of discipline on the part of the Russian workers. There is a difference, however, between instilling some degree of needed discipline and the stamping out of freedom.

Hours, Production, and Planning

THE working day in the Soviet Union is eight hours in the building trades, in work upon roads and canals, and in similar enterprises; seven hours in most other employment; and six hours for unhealthful work. These hours are worked five days in a six-day week, or 25 days in a five-week month. The number of regular working hours in a month of 30 days is therefore 200, 175, or 150. Overtime is officially not allowed, but at present the tendency is to permit long hours of overtime, sometimes under the name of "special task" hours. "Numbers of workers hold jobs in two different enterprises, in order to increase their income. There is also considerable overtime work without pay, either after regular hours or on rest days. The workers do this 'voluntarily' through trade union action. It takes workers of unusual courage to oppose such proposals.

Soviet workers enjoy security of employment, even though wages are low, so long as they manifest no opposition to governmental policy. A large proportion of them also enjoy socialized wages in the form of old-age pensions, vacations with pay, medical service and hospitalization, sick and maternity benefits, and similar advantages, which are provided to them without charge by the state. This means, of course, that the state is giving them part of their pay in free services. It should be noted, however, that present facilities in these respects are quite inadequate. The number of hospitals is small in proportion to the need, and their equipment is none too good; nevertheless, a big advance has been made over Czarist Russia in the provision for medical and health needs. In some of these respects Soviet Russia has established principles of security which go beyond those found in most capitalist countries, though the legal rights are not in all cases translated into benefits enjoyed by all. In January, 1939, some of the social benefits, as maternity leave, were sharply reduced.

A series of devices has been employed to raise production levels in the Soviet Union. Almost universal piece-work is one such method—

though communists long denounced piece-work as a device of capitalism for sweating workers. Shock brigades and "socialist competition" were other methods, with departments and factories challenging each other to increase their output. Most recent of such methods was the development of the Stakhanov movement, named after a miner who found a way, through team work and specialization, to increase output. The pay of leading Stakhanovists shot upwards to 10 or 20 times that of the average worker, and Stakhanovists received preference in many ways, such as choice apartments and tickets to rest homes. The capitalist world uses similar devices, calling them rationalization and division of labor.

The British labor leader, Sir Walter Citrine, found that monetary inducements to the workers to speed up production were emphasized and exploited more in Soviet Russia than in any other country. In Citrine's judgment, the pace at which workers were induced to labor was far too rapid, and involved great danger to health. "Observers more sympathetic to the regime deny this; traditionally Russian factories have worked at a rather slow pace. Yet it is reported that Charles Bedaux, internationally known speed-up expert, objected to the Soviet methods as both inhumane and inefficient. With more attention to the human factor, he is reported to have told a high Russian official, greater efficiency could be achieved. Kléber Legay, a French miner who investigated working conditions in Soviet mines, found sanitary conditions bad and safety measures inadequate. "I emphatically declare," he writes, "that in France no miner would accept work under similar conditions." "

Soon after the Stakhanovist movement started, all production norms were raised about 15 per cent, and the norms have again been raised since then. "This means that every worker must labor that much harder in order to obtain his former earnings. The Stakhanovists in one important sense are pace setters. Small wonder that Stakhanovists have not been popular with their fellow-workers, and that some have paid with their lives. The government's reply would be that, since Russia is a workers' state, there is a higher living standard for all when production is increased. That scarcely sounds convincing to an average worker who finds himself forced to labor harder for the same small income, while the favored Stakhanovist who was the cause enjoys a living standard many times his own."

Minimum wages are guaranteed in Soviet factories, but to receive the minimum the worker must perform a fixed task. If he does not fulfill his task, he receives only a percentage of the minimum wage. In some other countries, on the other hand, a minimum is fixed in many industries below which a worker's wage may not fall. The trend of real wages in the U.S.S.R. cannot accurately be determined, for since 1929 the cost of living index has not been published. Real wages are reduced by the turnover or sales tax, which has accounted in recent years for about three-fourths of the revenue of the Soviet government.⁶

In an effort to increase production strict discipline has been imposed on the Soviet workers. Armed guards are frequently stationed at factory gates and mine entrances, and only those with passes are admitted. The secret police have representatives at most large factories, and spies and informers among the men report to them.⁷ Workers are docked if they do not fulfill their production quotas. Railroad workers held responsible for accidents have been shot in numerous cases. Undoubtedly there have been genuine cases of sabotage, but such charges likewise permit severe punishment for carelessness or opposition. One who objected to conditions and agitated for a strike would probably be treated as a class enemy. So often have technicians been punished for sabotage when they made a mere error in judgment that they have found it safer to avoid responsibility and make as few decisions as possible.

The American mining engineer, John D. Littlepage, gives an interesting description of secret police activities in industrial enterprises: "It is always assumed, in every Soviet mine or factory or office, that a certain number of workers are police agents, and no one is ever quite sure which workers are agents and which are not. The police are known to have amateur agents almost everywhere, with instructions to report suspicious actions or conversations of any kind. There is so much vigilance of this kind in every Soviet enterprise that Soviet citizens seldom speak their real minds, even in a small group, for fear one of the group is a police agent. . . . It is known that these agents even report workers who grumble regularly. . . ."

"The police assigned to Soviet industrial enterprises do not confine themselves to watching potential wreckers. I know from my own observation that they also organize a network of labor spies. It is a

fact that any troublemaker among the workmen, who grumbles excessively or shows any tendency to criticize the Government, is likely to disappear quietly. The police handle such cases with great skill, and seldom raise a rumpus. I don't mean to suggest that such workers are treated violently; they are probably shipped off to out-of-the-way enterprises, perhaps to some of those operated by the police themselves."⁸

Who controls the factory? Originally the workers had a large measure of control, but that has long been lost. Kaganovich, who is perhaps second only to Stalin in the Soviet Union today, believes in centralized powers of management. At the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party, he said that "management means the power to distribute material things, to appoint and discharge subordinates, in a word, to be master of the particular enterprise."

It is the factory manager, the secretary of the Communist Party unit in the factory, and the head of the trade union committee who really control the factory. The factory manager is the most important of the three, with the other two functioning in most cases as advisors. This "triangle," as it is known, is found in every factory in the Soviet Union. The three men cannot reflect conflicting interests, however, for the factory manager and the union head are virtually always party members, selected by the party and subject to party discipline. The trade union leader is nominally elected by the workers, but the authors have been able to learn of no case in recent years in which a worker who was not supported by the party was elected to union office. It is wise, however, for the party to propose popular candidates. Only if the men composing the triangle incur the disfavor of higher authorities by failing to meet the assigned quotas or by otherwise violating the party line does it become possible for workers, by sending in complaints, to cause their downfall. Though the factory manager has great power, it is wise for him not to abuse it, but to take actions that are popular with the workers.

The process of planning in the Soviet Union is said to be a democratic one, at least as to details. Few would deny that basic policies are determined by the heads of the state, however. Planning takes place on the basis of reports of past productivity and estimates for the future sent in by factory heads. General policy for the coming period is decided by the Politburo of the Communist Party, and the

planning authorities apply this policy in the preparation of quotas of production for each industry. The commissariat for each industry then allots quotas to each factory; and similarly in agriculture quotas are allotted for the entire country, then for districts, and finally for each collective farm. The preliminary figures are discussed and criticized locally, and on the basis of these local reports the final figures are determined. Workers and officials often accept the quota assigned to them or revise it upward, for to protest that it is too high is to run some risk of accusation of sabotage. Recently a professor was arrested merely for saying that the plan for agriculture did not sufficiently take weather uncertainties into account. In earlier years more opportunity to revise figures in either direction may have existed.

Michael T. Florinsky thus characterizes the discussion of production quotas that takes place in factories and on collective farms: "Discussions are organized and frequently counter-plans are made by the local bodies. These counter-plans invariably suggest an increase in the original assignment. There seems to be no instance on record of doubts expressed by a factory that the proposed quota could be filled, even though failures to complete the assignments are common. With the same unflinching unanimity that has been already noted in Soviet elections industrial workers and farmers, on the invitation of the local communists, clamor for more exacting assignments and larger quotas."²⁸

Bureaucracy is combatted and the participation of large numbers in the work of governmental agencies is sought through the organization of active volunteer groups. These give attention to details of administration, however, not to matters of basic policy.

The Trade Union

OVER trade unions are among the largest in the world, with 23,000,000 members organized into 162 unions, and constituting 82 per cent of the total number of persons eligible (figures issued in September, 1938). Once these unions participated in management and attempted to be independent organizations of the wage-earners. But the leaders who held that point of view, such as Tomsky, have been "liquidated," and today the unions are mere organs of the

state. Workers are not forced to join, but most become members because of the preferential treatment they receive from the social insurance funds and in other respects. There is no right to form an independent union; a Soviet worker who wishes to become a union member can join only the union provided for him by the state. Earlier in the Soviet regime union membership had been compulsory.

The Soviet unions purport to engage in collective bargaining, and they do in fact discuss wages, hours, and working conditions with the management, and enter into collective agreements. Much less has been heard of collective agreements since 1933. In reality there can be no bargaining, as unionists in other countries understand the term, since the Soviet union heads and the management are both dominated by the party and both must obey party discipline. It amounts, therefore, to acceptance by both sides of whatever general policy has been previously adopted by the party and the government. If the party decides to increase production norms, the union heads must acquiesce, as they must acquiesce in any other policy. There appears little point in negotiating collective agreements, since the state determines wages, hours, and working conditions. The union leadership has had to direct the unions to resume the practice of negotiating agreements. The unions, however, help to adjust grievances, and to see that workers get their just due under the agreements that have been reached. Company unions in the United States did as much; the Russian unions resemble these far more than they do our real unions. One can say this and still recognize that unions will act differently under state or social ownership than under private capitalism. At all times, however, unions should be independent organizations of workers, through which they may protect and advance their interests on the job. That is scarcely true in Russia today.²⁹

The Soviet trade union has no independent existence apart from the state, and has in fact become an administrative organ of the state, for in 1933 the functions of the People's Commissariat of Labor were transferred to the unions. Since then the unions have administered the social insurance funds. Another function is to increase production; others are to enforce labor standards, and to carry on cultural and educational work. In the opinion of Sir Walter Citrine, the Soviet trade unions are "too much concerned with the output, and too little concerned with the real protection of the worker."³⁰ Many of the

fundamental labor laws of the U.S.S.R. were changed late in 1938 or early in 1939, without the unions even being consulted. Similarly, the government from time to time may change the level of pay of Russian workers without consulting the unions.

Do the Soviet unions have the right to strike? Let us permit the Russian trade union leader, A. Lozovsky, editor of the authoritative *Handbook on the Soviet Trade Unions*, to answer that question. "Against whom would the trade unions in the U.S.S.R. wage a struggle?" he asks. "Would they wage a struggle against the very state that has abolished the exploiters and defended the independence of the country against the encroachment of foreign interventionists? Of course not, for such action would be both senseless and criminal."⁸⁵ A strike is doubtless a form of struggle, and would therefore be considered a criminal act. And that in fact is what happens, whatever official theory may proclaim. Could a union, without striking, demand higher wages than the government has decreed? That, too, might be held to constitute a struggle, and therefore a criminal act.

Strikes do occasionally occur in the Soviet Union, when conditions are too poor for workers longer to endure them without protest. The best information—and the Soviet press seldom or never publishes a word about them—is that they are settled quickly, usually within several hours, and that the worst conditions complained of are usually remedied. But the leaders of the strike may quietly disappear within a short space of time, and be never heard of again.⁸⁶ The simplest worker does not have to be told that the secret police have struck again. Certainly there should be little occasion for strikes if there were true social ownership, and one could scarcely occur so long as the workers were fairly treated. But the workers should be the best judge of that, and should always possess the right thus to call attention dramatically to their grievances, and demand improvement.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union maintains a rigid control over union policies and activities, making it impossible for the union members to control their own organization, and independently and democratically reach their own decisions. How is party control maintained? Again let us let Lozovsky give an official answer. "The Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.," he writes, "in guiding the trade unions through the Communist trade union members, frequently adopts very important decisions on questions of trade union work.

... The Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party watches closely that the Party organizations of the trade unions—the Communists in the trade unions—carry out the decisions adopted by the trade unions and Party congresses."⁸⁷ One should remember in this connection that Article 126 of the new constitution makes the party members "the leading nucleus of all organizations," including, of course, the trade unions. For another group even to meet on policy would be a criminal act, and would doubtless result in their imprisonment or exile. In union meetings the party spokesman makes the party position known, and the rank-and-file workers usually follow the party lead because that course is safest.

The trade unions have little control over their own affairs. The 1932 convention of the Soviet trade unions unanimously re-elected Tomsky and his old associates to a new term of office. Shortly afterward they were all suspended by order of the Politburo and Shvernik and his associates appointed in their places. Some of the men thus appointed to high trade union positions had previously been active in other fields, and had had little practical union experience. Recent sessions of the Central Council of Trade Unions have indicted union leaders for bureaucracy, for indifference to the needs of the membership, for improper use of funds, for complete neglect of democracy, and for other abuses.

This is what *Bolshevik*, the organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, has to say on the subject of democracy in the Soviet trade unions:

"Many instances testify to the crying lack of democracy in the trade unions . . . In 65 central committees of unions only 116 members of the presidium were elected by the congresses, while 139 (a majority) were co-opted. If this is the situation in the central, leading trade union organs, it is easy to imagine how the will of the membership is violated in the lower organs and in the shops. . . .

"The plenum of the central council did not call a convention for two and one-half years. In the central committees of many trade unions the presidiums practically do not exist: the chairman and secretaries decide between themselves all problems."⁸⁸

In union elections, as in others, the party slate of candidates is almost always elected, and usually by a unanimous vote. Sometimes, especially in local unions in remote areas, the party slate is voted

down. This may be done safely, from time to time, for personal objections—never for political reasons. What the non-communists could never do is have their own caucus, and propose their own slate. Any opposition in important bodies is very dangerous.

In the fall of 1937, P. Moskatov, secretary of the All-Union Central Soviet of Labor Unions, wrote in *Pravda* that the unions, following party instructions, "are resolutely eradicating the remnants of trade unionism from the practice of the work of the labor union organs." It was Tomsky and other right opportunists, all of them since liquidated, who had "cultivated in the labor movement non-politicism and trade unionism with its theory and practice of counterposing the labor unions to the Soviet government."²⁰

A year later Harold Denny was able to report in *The New York Times* that the lingering remnants of trade unionism in the Soviet unions had been virtually destroyed. This means, Denny wrote, "the conquering of the last resistance within the Red trade unions to the Stalin policy of employing the trade unions not as organizations bargaining for monetary advantage but as organs of the State being used to increase production, reduce operating costs and strengthen labor discipline, though meanwhile doing all within their limits for the benefit of the workers."²¹ The expression "trade unionism," it should be added, is used contemptuously by Soviet leaders to describe unions in capitalist countries which bargain within the framework of capitalism.

Let us permit Peter A. Speck of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U. S. Department of Labor to appraise the relations between the Soviet government and the Russian unions. "The Government is the sole employer of the workers," Speck writes, "but considers itself as being identical with the workers. As a result, no strikes or lock-outs or labor demands addressed to the Government are practiced or tolerated. The labor unions are a branch of the Government roughly corresponding to the labor departments in other countries."²²

The Rights of Women

IN THE treatment of women the Soviet Union has registered great advances. In many parts of Czarist Russia, particularly in the east, a woman was a creature of inferior rights, subject to the power of her husband. All that has been changed, and woman has

been emancipated in the western sense, and placed on a legal status equal to man's. In the law courts and in political life, in the factories and in the unions, women have been made the equals of men. Likewise with regard to marriage and divorce, they have been given equality.²³

Yet life for Soviet women has a darker side as well. Many women are employed, for example, at heavy and dangerous labor. A French miner was shocked to see women doing all types of work in Soviet mines except cutting. In one mine, of 45 persons he saw, 22 were women.²⁴ Lozovsky writes that "for the last five years the number of cases of disability among women as a result of women's diseases dropped 59 per cent in the machine building enterprises and 37 per cent in the coal mining industry."²⁵ Women also helped to dig the Moscow subway. Lozovsky tells us, however, that there are restrictions against the lifting and carrying of heavy loads by women. The restriction against working on night shifts, it should be noted, applies only to pregnant women and nursing mothers. Women have always worked hard in Russia, it is true, but Littlepage asserts that women did not work in Russian mines until the first five-year plan was launched.²⁶

One of the great rights conferred upon women by the revolution was the right to avoid having undesired children. This was done, curiously enough, not by making birth control devices more easily available, but by granting the right of abortion. In June, 1936, however, the government issued a decree prohibiting abortions, except where demanded by health, and punishing with two years' imprisonment anyone who induced a woman to undergo the operation. The one performing it illegally is punished with three years' imprisonment. The woman is punished with a "social reprimand," and is fined 300 rubles in case of repetition. As a result, the government happily reported, the Moscow birth rate in February, 1937, was double the rate of February, 1936. Birth control devices may be bought, especially in the cities, but they are of poor quality, and the government conducts little educational work on the subject.

Does this measure bear any resemblance to similar efforts to increase the birth rate made in fascist countries? Officially, of course not, though fertile Soviet women, like their Italian and German sisters, receive benefits or prizes for bearing in abundance. The law was passed, Lozovsky writes, upon request of the women. What happened

was that a huge newspaper campaign of letters by women and articles by physicians against abortion was carried on, both before and after the government proposed the law against the practice. Such campaigns are simple to manage in a totalitarian state, where every editor must follow the party line. Some letters against the proposed law were published, it is true, but many, many more supporting the proposal saw the light of print. "After two years of experience," *Pravda* says, "the anti-abortion law deserves to be called the law of happy motherhood. But the results would have been even more impressive if the enemies of the people and the fascist provocateurs had not sabotaged also in this field."⁶⁶

We shall leave the happy Russian women going to fascist provocateurs to escape unwanted motherhood, and merely ask with Dorothy Dunbar Bromley how many birth control clinics the state has set up as a wholesome alternative to abortion.

National Minorities, Peasants, and Soldiers

IN THE treatment of its national minorities the Soviet government, in an important sense, has set an example to virtually the entire world. No discrimination based on race is permitted, and the use of minority languages and the development of minority cultures is fostered. The pogroms against the Jews in Czarist times are still fresh in people's memories; when so much of the world is persecuting the Jews it is worthy of attention that anti-Semitism is illegal in the U.S.S.R. And yet Walter Duranty could write in a dispatch from Paris on October 11, 1938, that "Stalin has shot more Jews in two years of the purge than were ever killed in Germany."⁶⁷ Needless to say, they were shot because they were thought disloyal to Stalin, not because they were Jews. The Jews have indeed suffered under the Soviet regime to a greater extent than most other groups, because so many Jews were tradesmen, religiously inclined, Zionists, or because cause through relatives abroad valuta might be obtained. Others were persecuted because they were old Bolsheviks and revolutionaries. It should also be remembered that the Soviet Union has not joined other nations in offering asylum to Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany.

Under the Czars the 188 former subject peoples had been subjected to a policy of forcible Russification. This is not true to the same extent under the Soviets, though study of the Russian language is compulsory in all schools, and those who oppose its teaching in minority areas are denounced as bourgeois nationalists.⁶⁸ In May, 1938, the government attacked linguists of the Academy of Sciences for allowing the Russian language to be "spoiled" by Polish expressions in the Ukraine and White Russia. Some months earlier *Pravda* had attacked as Ukrainian nationalists certain academicians who were allegedly seeking to tear Ukrainian culture away from Russian culture. A specific charge was that Ukrainian words identical with or very similar to Russian words had been avoided in a dictionary published in 1937.⁶⁹ Nevertheless it remains true that minorities are encouraged to use their own language and develop their own culture, though they are subject, of course, to the same restraints as other citizens.

Under Article 17 of the new constitution each of the eleven constituent republics that make up the U.S.S.R. has the free right to secede. Any advocacy of secession, however, is punished as treason and counter-revolution. During the widespread heresy hunts of recent years, numerous leading officials of "independent national republics" were among those liquidated. The government of each of the constituent republics, it must be remembered, is in the hands of local party members who are subject unconditionally to the authority of the Communist Party Central Committee in Moscow. There can therefore be no real autonomy, except within the limits desired by the Central Committee.

Soviet treatment of its peasantry, and especially of the richer peasants or "kulaks," has been very harsh. The official policy has been to "liquidate the kulaks as a class." Any peasant opponent of the government's policy of immediate and complete collectivization was apt to be called a kulak; if he was so poor that he could not possibly be termed a kulak, he was called a kulak agent, and given the same punishment. Kulaks, it should be remembered, were wealthy only by Russian standards; a peasant who possessed more than one cow was in danger of outlawry as a kulak.

In January, 1930, the government launched its campaign for complete collectivization of agriculture. The peasants, who composed roughly 80 per cent of the population of the U.S.S.R., were over-

whelmily opposed to this policy, but their opposition was crushed. Especially did the kulaks oppose collectivization. Class war was intensified in the villages, with the poor and middle peasants being set against the richer ones. Every village was ordered to round up its kulaks; some protested that they had none, but they were told that they must have some, and that they should find them. The land and means of production of the kulaks were confiscated for the collective farms; but the kulaks were barred from entry into the collectives, and likewise from renting land. Rather than have their livestock thus taken away, the peasants slaughtered their animals. For this they were exiled by the tens of thousands to northern Russia and Siberia. Within four years half the livestock in the Soviet Union was thus destroyed. Whole villages of rebellious peasants were shipped in freight cars to the forced labor camps of the secret police. The government has never disclosed the number of peasants thus deported, but private estimates run as high as several million. The treatment of the peasants was so severe that Stalin finally spoke out sharply against it.

The year of 1932, as a result of governmental policy and peasant resistance to it, was one of famine throughout wide sections of Russia. Not a word about the famine was printed in the Soviet press, and no effort was made to obtain relief from abroad. Official governmental policy denied that a famine existed, and refused foreign journalists the right to travel in the area. The government allowed the peasantry to starve as punishment for opposing its policy. Estimates of the loss of lives from the famine range from one to six millions. No official figures are available, for the government stopped the publication of vital statistics for the period of the famine. Since 1933 the collective farms have unquestionably made great progress, and today they appear firmly established.

What was the toll of famine and purges? The government census, taken early in 1937, had been expected to show a population of about 180,000,000, and the government had been using this figure for some time. What the census probably showed, according to émigré sources, was a population of about 166,000,000. The exact figure is not known, because the census was suppressed. The census taken in January, 1939, showed a population of 170,000,000.

On the collective farms the same bureaucracy found in other de-

partments of Soviet life has been in evidence. A record of illegal expulsions, heartless treatment, and general lack of democracy may be read in indictments of conditions on collective farms made by the government itself—for example, in the decree of April 19, 1938.

The Soviet army from the beginning sought to abolish the gulf between officers and men. Czarist officers' rankings, indeed, were abolished, and were not reintroduced until 1935. Though discipline is severe, as is to be expected, the social gulf between officers and common soldiers is narrower than in almost any other army. The army is a school, for literacy, for trades, and for the party line. To check on the political orthodoxy of the army, political commissars with powers equal to those of the military commanders have recently been assigned to all units.

Universal military service is the law of the U.S.S.R. Exception is made only in the case of members of certain religious sects who are conscientiously opposed to war. Young men thus exempted must be born into families belonging to those sects. Early Soviet policy, even during the civil wars, was more liberal, for any religious objector found genuine was exempted. Pacifist literature cannot be printed in the Soviet Union, nor can it be brought in from abroad. People have been exiled for circulating literature advocating conscientious objection to military service. The government professes to be anti-militarist, but only the official brand of anti-militarist propaganda is permitted."

Elections and the State

IN 1918 the Bolshevik revolutionary slogan was "All Power to the Soviets," the councils of workers', soldiers', and peasants' deputies. Today the Soviet constitution confers the legislative power of the U.S.S.R. on the Supreme Soviet, but that body is little more than a sounding board for the real rulers of Russia, and a rubber stamp for their actions.

Under the constitution there are soviets in cities and rural localities, in districts and provinces, in autonomous republics and in the U.S.S.R., each soviet exercising authority within the limits of the power conferred upon it. The Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., which has exclusive right to the legislative power of the U.S.S.R., consists of two chambers, the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of National-

ities. At a joint sitting these bodies elect a presidium consisting of a chairman, 11 vice-chairmen, a secretary, and 24 members. The presidium exercises wide powers between sessions of the Supreme Soviet, and is accountable to the latter for its activities. The highest executive and administrative organ of state power is the Council of People's Commissars.²² This is the formal organization of the government. Some day, perhaps, life will be breathed into these organs, and they will function as leading organs of the government. The real power is now exercised, however, not by the soviets, but by the party—which means by Stalin and his close associates. About three-fourths of the delegates to the All-Union Soviet Congresses have usually been party members, bound by the rigid party discipline; even the others have been chosen for their loyalty to the party and to its leadership. More recently the party has tended to diminish in importance, though the real authority of the soviets has not increased. The result has been to concentrate power even more completely in the hands of Stalin and those close to him.

In the soviets, especially in the higher bodies, it is difficult to find controversy, debate, opposition, or any dissenting voice or vote on any subject. Only unanimous action has thus far been reported from the Supreme Soviet. Members do indeed suggest amendments, but usually to clear up possible ambiguities. Even the non-aggression pact with Germany in August, 1939, reversing basic Soviet policy at a critical juncture in world affairs, was ratified unanimously without a word of opposition or even a question being asked. So it was also with the old Congress of Soviets and its Central Executive Committee. Delegates listened to reports, applauded with the correct degree of enthusiasm, and voted unanimously for the measures prepared in advance by the real government. In just this fashion was the present constitution adopted. In the same fashion the Supreme Soviet will regularly elect by unanimous vote the presidium chosen for it, and by unanimous vote approve whatever has been done between its sessions. In the words of Stalin, "no important political or organizational problem is ever decided by our soviets and other mass organizations without directives from the Party."²³ Though the deputies exercise little or no real legislative power, they may nevertheless perform valuable services by acting as a liaison between ordinary citizens and the government.²⁴

The Duma in the final years of Czarism, it should be noted, was not a true parliament, but merely an advisory body. Yet its members represented opposition parties, possessed freedom of debate, and enjoyed immunity from arrest. None of this is true of the Supreme Soviet under Stalin. Even revolutionary parties, including the Bolsheviks, were represented in the Duma, and in the first and second Dumas especially they elected large groups of deputies.

Elections are a farce in the Soviet Union, just as they are a farce in Italy and Germany. Under the new constitution universal suffrage and the direct, secret ballot have indeed been introduced, but these reforms mean little since there is no right of organized opposition nor even of dissenting opinion. In the first election under the new constitution, held in December, 1937, there was one candidate—and only one candidate—in all but a tiny handful of election districts. In March, 1936, in an interview with Roy Howard, Stalin had predicted an intense electoral struggle over the personal merits of candidates; even this failed to materialize. Every candidate belonged to what was called the "Stalinist bloc of party and non-party Bolsheviks." It was possible to make speeches for them, but never against them. Anyone who had opposed that slate would automatically have been considered a traitor and an enemy of the people, and treated accordingly. It was not considered safe to fail to vote.

Elections to the soviets of the constituent republics, held in June, 1938, were similar in every respect. Indeed, virtually all elections in the Soviet Union are of this nature, whether in the government, in the party, in the trade unions, or in any other body. There is almost always just one candidate for each post, who enjoys party backing; if more than one is to be elected, there is usually a party slate of exactly the number to be chosen. Important choices in most instances are not freely arrived at in lower party caucuses, but are handed down to them from higher party officials. There is no free speech, no free campaigning, no rival organization, no organized or unorganized opposition, no real election.

Under Article 141 of the new constitution, nomination of candidates for public office may be made by public organizations and societies of working people, by Communist Party organizations, by trade unions, cooperatives, youth organizations, and cultural societies. Every one of these organizations is controlled by the party, however,

whose members under Article 126 comprise the "leading nucleus of all organizations." All candidates, in reality, are therefore named by the party. A number of them will not be party members, it is true, though the percentage of party members usually increases as one ascends the hierarchy of ruling bodies. Every non-party member, however, will be chosen for his 100 per cent devotion to the party and to Stalin.

In recent elections several candidates were frequently nominated in the same district by various organizations, but all except one almost always withdrew before election day arrived. That process is not very mysterious. All it takes is a suggestion from the party secretary or another leading official in that district that the party is supporting another nominee. Then to remain a candidate would be to violate party discipline, and to invite the attention of the secret police. Despite careful scrutiny in advance, several candidates have fallen into disgrace during the electoral campaign period. Their names have simply been dropped from the list of candidates. Soon afterward one may learn that they have been replaced in other posts, and their arrests will almost always follow—or precede—the announcement of their successors. Such was the case with Valery Mezhlank, chairman of the State Planning Commission until January, 1938.¹⁸

Previous constitutions contained lists of disfranchised persons, including clergy, former Czarist officials, and those who employed others for profit. At present every adult is granted the franchise, except the mentally deficient and those condemned by law with deprivation of electoral rights. With nominations controlled so rigorously and no contests allowed, it matters little today how many can vote. Receipt of the franchise is of the highest importance, however, for it removes other important disabilities that have already been discussed. Other reforms in the direction of a formal democracy have substituted direct for indirect elections to the higher soviets, and secret for open balloting. Until recently voting was done openly by show of hands. Even now nominations are made in that fashion.

Soviet Ballots

How are Soviet elections conducted and what rights do voters possess? We read the instructions printed in *Pravda* before elections of Dec. 12, 1937, held under the new constitution adopted year before: "Each elector will receive two ballots: one—of white color, with

the names of the candidates for deputyship in the Soviet of the Union; the other—of blue, with the names of the candidates for deputyship in the Soviet of Nationalities. . . .

"The ballot has two columns: in one of them are printed the family names, given names, and patronymics of the candidates for deputyship (there may be one or several of them); in the other—an indication of the resolutions of the general assemblies of enterprises . . . or societies of toilers which nominated the given candidate. . . .

"Thus the voter MUST NOT WRITE ANYTHING on the ballot. He need only leave on the ballot the name of the candidate for whom he gives his vote and (if there are two, three, or more candidates) cross out the remaining ones. . . .

"MAY THE ELECTOR WRITE NEW NAMES IN THE BALLOT? NO, HE MAY NOT. According to the election law, in a given electoral district only those candidates may be voted upon who have been duly registered by the election commission and listed by it in the ballot. The district election commission registers the candidates put forward at general assemblies of public organizations and societies of toilers. . . . Moreover, the consent of the nominated candidate to be voted upon in the given electoral district is required. . . .

"The elector must use only ballots and envelopes of the established form. . . . Only after having convinced himself that the ballots are in order is the elector to put them into an envelope, seal it, and having returned it to the room in which the ballot boxes stand, put the envelope in a box in the presence of the members of the election commission" [capitals in original].¹⁹

It should be noted that thus far there have been very few cases, throughout the wide expanse of the Soviet Union, where more than one name has appeared on a ballot. To write in a name is to render the ballot invalid. In Nazi Germany there is a place to vote "no," but not in Soviet elections. Small wonder that the "Stalinist bloc of party and non-party Bolsheviks" receives more than 99 per cent of the votes.

Appearing on the next page is a reproduction of an actual Soviet ballot, one of the few to have found its way to this country. A translation appears facing it. The ballot for the Soviet of Nationalities is similar. On following pages appear a reproduction of a Soviet election poster, and a translation. The poster and the ballot are sufficient commentaries on the freedom of Soviet elections as now conducted.

Apocynum androsaemifolium, *apocynum*

**• АНТИТАТ
Освита Милитаризма**

ДЕНЬГАМ
СОБОРА СМЕР



за стрелков ботаника —
инженер
Союзприма РСФСР
товарища Н. А. БУЛГАНИНА



за правното мнение
на проф. Никола-Стефан
Иванов (установен)
Товарища О. Ф. ЛЕОНОВ



1) *Arresting* — also includes a Bayesian Cost CCP
 R *adaptable* & *moderately* or a *vector* *via* to 18 weeks now, *learning*
 R *nonlinear* & *nonlinear* *error* *algorithm* *of* *predict* *the* *data* *algorithm*
 R *deep* & *deep* *into* *nonlinear* *data* *into* *and* *predict*
online *learning*

[illegible]

Only one occurrence of a significant correlation was noticed. Organisms that were in the same environment had similar feeding rates. $r = 0.66$, $P = 0.0001$.



Протягують історичну ідею модернізації українського суспільства, зокладаючи її на основі історичних традицій українського народу. Вони виступають за відновлення української державності, за відновлення української держави, за відновлення української держави, за відновлення української держави.

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BALLOT (Literally, "electoral bulletin")

FOR THE ELECTIONS TO THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE U.S.S.R.

December 12, 1937

Magnitogorsk District No. 296 for Elections to the
Soviet of the Union

Leave in the ballot the name of the ONE
candidate for whom you vote, cross out
the rest.

Family name, given name, and patronymic of the candidate for deputyship	By whom candidate for deputyship was nominated
---	---

IVANOV,
Konstantin, Nikolaevich

By assemblies of workers, en-
gineers, technicians, and em-
ployees of rolling mills (prokat-
nykh tsekhov), by a general
assembly of workers and em-
ployees of the Magnitogorsk
Stalin metallurgical plant, an
assembly of medical workers of
the city of Magnitogorsk, and
an assembly of workmen and
workwomen, engineers and tech-
nicians, of wood processing
Combine No. 1.

ИЗБИРАТЕЛЬНЫЙ БЮЛЛЕТЕНЬ

по выборам в Верховный Совет СССР

12 декабря 1937 года

Магнитогорский округ № 296 по выборам в Совет Союза

Оставьте в избирательном бюллетене фа-
милию, имя, отчество кандидата, за которо-
го Вы голосуете, остальные вычеркните

Фамилия, имя, отчество кандидата в депутаты	Кем выставлен кандидат в депутаты
ИВАНОВ, Константин Николаевич	Собранием рабочих, инже- неров, техников и служащих прокатных цехов, общезаво- дским собранием рабочих, ин- женерно-технических работ- ников и служащих Магнито- горского металлургического завода им. Сталина, машини- ских работников города Маг- нитогорска: рабочих, работ- ниц, инженеров и техников лесно-обделочного комбината № 1

Председатель Магнитогорской окружной избирательной
комиссии по выборам в Совет Союза Н. ЛАПИН

President of the Magnitogorsk District Electoral
Commission for Elections to the Soviet of the Union

N. LAPIN

Can one speak against a candidate, even if one cannot vote against him? Again let us seek the answer in *Pravda*:

"The Party or non-Party Bolshevik who has been vested with the powers of a trusted person should make it clear to himself that his task is to obtain the votes of ABSOLUTELY all the electors of his precinct for the candidate registered in the given electoral district. . .

"Every Party regional committee is obligated to use the trusted people as informers in order better to know what is going on in the electoral district, in order to know of the slightest attempts at hostile agitation." "

It is elections thus conducted that the Soviet press hails as the most completely free and democratic in the history of the world! "

The Party

THE state is completely controlled by Stalin through the Communist Party, the only political organization permitted. Communists may hold the dictatorship of the Communist Party to be equivalent to the dictatorship of the proletariat, but socialists and others distinguish between the rule of the workers and the rule over the workers by an organized minority. Stalin's explanation of the prohibition of all other parties is interesting. In other states, he declared in his report on the new constitution delivered November 25, 1936, there were antagonistic classes, and opposing political parties represented them. "In the U.S.S.R.," Stalin went on, "there are only two classes, workers and peasants, whose interests not only are not antagonistic but, on the contrary, amicable. Consequently there are no grounds for the existence of several parties, and therefore for the existence of freedom of such parties in the U.S.S.R. There are grounds for only one party, the Communist Party, in the U.S.S.R. Only one party can exist, the Communist Party." "The prohibition of rival political organization, therefore, is not limited to a transition period, however long, but is permanent. It should not be necessary to add that, from the socialist point of view at least, rival political parties can both be loyal to socialism and the U.S.S.R., but differ on the immediate policies to be pursued.

The primary unit of Communist Party organization is the party committee, formerly called "cell," which is made up of the party

members found in each union, soviet, village, office, or regiment. These units, of which there are about 135,000, elect delegates to higher party bodies, culminating in the All-Union Party Congress. This congress, which usually meets every two years, is officially the supreme authority of the party. Between sessions its powers are exercised by a Central Committee, which is chosen by the congress. The Central Committee elects a secretariat, an organization bureau for administrative tasks, and a Political Bureau to formulate party policies. The Political Bureau or Politburo, as it is more often called, consists at present of ten members and several alternates. It is the real source of power in the U.S.S.R., for all party members—and these hold most of the leading positions in the Soviet Union—are bound by its decisions. Its decisions are frequently countersigned by the head of the Soviet government; whether so countersigned or not, they represent, for all practical purposes, the law of the U.S.S.R. Every important issue is considered by the Politburo, and the really significant decisions are those reached by it.

The Eighteenth Party Congress, the first held since 1934, brought this interesting dispatch to *The New York Times* from its Moscow correspondent, Harold Denny: "The congress assembling today is greatly changed from the preceding congress in January, 1934. It represents virtually a new party, for the purge, extending from 1936 well into 1938, disposed of many of the best-known figures of the Bolshevik revolution. Comparatively few of the old Bolsheviks, veterans of the 1917 revolution, are left. The majority of the delegates have been party members only since 1926, when the factional fight with Leon Trotsky . . . was at its height.

"The official record of the 1934 congress makes strange reading today. Of the seventy-one members of the central committee, only twenty-two are still active. Many have been shot and many disappeared without explanation.

"One hundred and thirty-five prominent party members spoke at that congress, including such world-famous men as Gregory Zinovieff, Leo Kameneff and Nikolai Bukharin. Of them, fourteen are officially known to have been shot. One, Mikhail Tomsky, committed suicide as he was about to be arrested. One, Sergey Kiroff, was assassinated. Three died natural deaths. A large proportion of the others disappeared.

"Since that congress the party has been purged of the anti-Stalinist element and new members have been recruited up to its normal strength, approximately 2,000,000."⁸⁰

From its beginning the Bolshevik Party was highly centralized, with far more authority vested in its Central Committee than is the case with most other political organizations. Members were bound to unquestioning obedience to Central Committee orders, enforced by a rigid discipline. Only such a party, it was argued, could be successful in a revolutionary effort against Czarism. The policy of the party might be changed by a party congress, but between congresses the Central Committee was supreme. This form of organization lent itself easily to perpetuation of control by a few leaders, since dissenters and possible rivals could be expelled. With party officials usually named by the Central Committee and the party press controlled by it, the chances of an opposition group to win control of the party were indeed slight. Since the Bolsheviks assumed power in Russia the party's discipline has been made even more severe. A limited form of legal propaganda within the party and its affiliated organizations remained possible for some years, but soon this also disappeared. Ever since 1930, at the latest, there has been scarcely a remnant of democracy within the party.

Since the Central Committee is also the real government of Russia, and since any deviation from the party line is apt to be branded counter-revolutionary, dissenters who are expelled from the party are likely to be arrested and imprisoned, exiled, or shot. Constant use of the expressions "one and only" and "one and united" party emphasizes the impossibility of any legal opposition within or without the party. Discussion of general party policy takes place only when the Central Committee considers such discussion desirable.

Elections to party congresses are controlled by the Central Committee, which can easily assure itself of a majority of supporters. Indeed, it has been many years since any dissent at all was registered. Each party congress elects the incoming Central Committee; in practice it merely approves the slate prepared for it by the party leaders. Within the party, as in the unions or the soviets, few if any contests are permitted, and there is only one candidate for each post. Local party and district secretaries, in the past often elected, are now usually appointed from above. In theory the all-powerful

Politburo is the creature of the Central Committee, and responsible to it. In practice it works the other way, for the Politburo makes up the slate of the Central Committee members.⁸¹

Who, then, is master of the Politburo? The answer, of course, is Joseph Stalin, secretary-general of the party since 1922. Stalin's power is not dignified by any high governmental title, but as a practical matter his power is as absolute as that of any Czar. Everywhere Stalin is praised and glorified in terms that are sickeningly extravagant.⁸² The other members of the Politburo with Stalin may choose the Central Committee, but history indicates that Stalin alone really determines who may be elevated to or remain on the Politburo. Those suspected of opposition or even lukewarmness toward him and his policies soon fall from power, and usually are fortunate to escape execution as traitors. Of the Central Committee that led the Bolsheviks in the revolutionary and civil war period, only Stalin is left.⁸³

The party is watched constantly to ensure its perfect loyalty to Stalin and his policies. The Central Control Commission of the party checks on the actions of all party members, and disciplines those who fail to follow orders. The secret police are everywhere, scrutinizing both party members and ordinary citizens. Periodically the party is purged, with expulsions by the thousands and hundreds of thousands. In successive purges between 1933 and 1937 more than a million party members, roughly one-third of the total membership, were expelled. In some districts only a small minority of the party membership remained. In so bureaucratic a fashion was some of the purging done that many of the purgers were themselves purged in turn. Sometimes party cleanings, as in factories, are held publicly, and non-party members, along with rank-and-file members of the party, may help to eliminate those who have shirked their duties or otherwise shown themselves to be undesirable party members. The regime has recently indicated that the purges may be expected to continue until the Soviet Union is no longer surrounded by capitalist states.⁸⁴

Yet there is no dearth of applicants for party membership, since that is the first step on the road to advancement. Leading positions are usually filled by party members—though less so than in the past—and in every sphere of life the party member receives preference. The role of the party has diminished somewhat in recent years, but it is still of enormous importance.

Applicants for membership are carefully scrutinized. They must be sponsored by older members, and must serve one or more years as candidates before admission. It is dangerous for a member to leave voluntarily, for that calls attention to dissatisfaction. Several million young people are found in the Comsomol, the party organization for those between 15 and 30 years of age.

Once the party ruled the state; now both party and state are ruled by Stalin.

Are the Russians Free?

SOVIET experience demonstrates that real liberty is not likely to exist in a one-party state. When, as has happened in the U.S.S.R., democracy is crushed within that party, then liberty is surely dead. For what has happened to freedom and democracy in Soviet Russia, Stalin's regime cannot alone be held responsible. It would be more accurate to say that he carried to an extreme certain practices and methods inherent in Bolshevism itself.

Clearly the Russians are not free, if that term has any real meaning. The rights that they possess are vastly inferior to those possessed by citizens of the United States and the other western democracies. In the first "workers' state" the worker is permitted fewer liberties than in capitalist democracies. Rights of free speech, assembly, or- ganization, and press are non-existent. The Russian worker enjoys the real advantage of employment and of a certain degree of security, provided he is not critical of the regime; but living standards are terribly low, even for the more fortunate skilled workers. Officially there can be no exploitation in Russia, and productive equipment and the national income are the property of all workers. Actually the workers have little to say as to distribution of the national income, and a very high percentage is drained off for capital investment, for armaments, or for the huge bureaucracy. The state can exploit, just as private capitalists can.

Certain rights that the Russians possessed even under the despotic Czars have been curtailed or lost under the Soviets. The Soviet citizen today, for example, has virtually lost the right to emigrate. There was greater freedom to speak under the Czars, and greater freedom to publish papers and books, hold meetings, and form organizations. Each of the Imperial Dumas or Parliaments elected in Czarist Russia

had large numbers of opponents of the regime, including Bolsheviks, in its membership. The overwhelming majority in the 1906 Duma were opponents of the regime. Political offenders were better treated under the Czars, though ordinary criminals were treated worse. On living standards accurate comparison is difficult; but under the Czars hours of work were longer, employment less certain, and educational opportunities limited. Russia was less of a police state under the Czars, but perhaps merely because the Czarist secret police were less efficient than the G.P.U. and N.K.V.D. Soviet citizens are encouraged to complain if they do not receive fair treatment, but they are utterly helpless if their complaints, as frequently happens, are ignored by the bureaucracy.

In other fields, notably literacy, science, and the treatment of women and national minorities, the Soviets have made progress. Once the industrial machine has been fully constructed, the living standards of the masses should rise to levels unprecedented for Russia. Perhaps — although this is debatable — liberty should be regained more readily from a party bureaucracy than from landlords, capitalists, and a hereditary nobility. At least democracy is a stated goal in the U.S.S.R., whereas in fascist countries dictatorship is a permanent ideal; some day the Russian workers may make their stated democratic goal a reality.

It must be recognized that the Soviet regime has had to cope with enormous problems, in rebuilding the shattered economic life of Russia after the war, in transforming a primitive agricultural economy into a modern industrial state, and in eliminating the private capitalist. All this has had to be done in the face of hostile powers, with the danger of war forever present. For their many real achievements the Soviets deserve full credit.

Certainly communism, with all its denials of human rights and civil liberties, is far superior to fascism. In Germany and Italy the workers have lost civil rights without making any gains in the economic or in other fields. Capitalism with all its attending evils is retained under fascism, civil liberties and democratic rights disappear, nationalism and militarism are glorified, and minorities are crushed. Nothing there is hopeful; in the Soviet Union, on the other hand, though the average worker does not possess more civil rights than under fascism, private capitalism, the source of so much woe, has

been eliminated. With regard to the lack of civil and democratic rights and the use of terror to crush all opposition, fascism and communism are similar. The word "totalitarian" may equally be applied to both.

"Real liberty," Stalin declared in an interview with Roy Howard, "can exist only where exploitation has been abolished, where there is no unemployment and poverty, where man is not haunted by fear of being deprived tomorrow of work, of home and of bread. Only in such a society is real, and not paper, personal and every other liberty possible. . . . We did not build this (socialist) society in order to restrict personal liberty but in order that the human individual may feel really free. We built it for the sake of real personal liberty, liberty without quotation marks."⁸⁸

These are brave words. We have seen how hollow has been their meaning in the past and what a mockery the very word "liberty" is in the U.S.S.R. today. But one can hope for the future. One can hope that wholesale purges and mass treason trials belong only in the past. One can hope that the Russian masses, told that theirs is a democratic country, will some day achieve democracy and liberty in fact. One can hope that the Russian revolution, stolen from the masses by a Stalinist bureaucracy, will some day be rewon by them. One can hope that democracy can be achieved within the Communist Party, and that other parties will win the right to function. One can hope that the material benefits of state ownership will be more equitably shared by the masses, and supplemented with the liberty that socialists believe to be equally important. One can still hold communism superior to fascism, while rejecting the continuing totalitarian terror that is a common feature of both, and that tends to reduce life under it to a common denominator of serfdom to the state. Above all, one can hope that the western democracies, including the United States, will some day enjoy the blessings of socialism without having first to endure the agony of the transition period through which Russia has been passing for more than 20 years.

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FOOTNOTE REFERENCES

1. *Stalin on the New Soviet Constitution*, p. 23. This report has been issued by International Publishers in pamphlet form; page references are to this pamphlet.
2. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, p. 73. References to Lenin do not imply complete agreement with his policies; space prevents a discussion of them. The quotation is from the revised translation issued by International Publishers.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
4. *Stalin on the New Soviet Constitution*, pp. 5-7, 11-12. This distinction has nothing to do with the differences in the United States between the Socialist and Communist Parties, which have disagreed mostly on tactics to be followed in the achievement of social ownership.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 22.
6. See Michael T. Florinsky, *Toward an Understanding of the U.S.S.R.*, pp. 71, 74-5. For the detailed story of the revolutionary and civil war period see William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution: 1917-1921*, and Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*.
7. Victor Serge, *Russia Twenty Years After*, pp. 94-120.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 171-185.
9. The text of this law appears in *Izvestia*, August 8, 1932. The law provides the death penalty and the confiscation of all property for the theft of any property belonging to collective farms or cooperatives, and also for the theft of freight on rail or water transport. All such property is to be held equal in significance to state property. Under extenuating circumstances, the penalty may be reduced to imprisonment for not less than ten years, plus confiscation of all property.
10. Anna Louise Strong, *The New Soviet Constitution*, pp. 121-169, gives the text of the new constitution and lists the chief changes made from former constitutions. See also Vera Michele Dean, "The New Constitution of the U.S.S.R.," *Foreign Policy Reports*, April 15, 1937.
11. Roger N. Baldwin, *Liberty Under the Soviets*, p. 9.
12. *The New York Times*, September 15, 1937.
13. Most newspaper correspondents and large numbers of tourists have commented on this. For a typical discussion see William Henry Chamberlin, *Russia's Iron Age*, pp. 168-9. Some tourists, on the other hand, report that they found little fear in the average person, but that those who were politically active were very cautious.
14. Baldwin, op. cit., pp. 160-1.
15. P. Katsanyan in *Izvestia*, August 6, 1936. Quoted by Dean, op. cit., p. 37.
16. The consumers' cooperative movement was long powerful in the Soviet Union. In 1935, however, the city cooperatives were absorbed into the regular state system of retail distribution. Rural cooperatives retained their theoretical independence, but what information is available on their operation indicates that they do not function as cooperatives do in other countries. Leaders are frequently appointed, and members lack the control over income, expenditures, and prices that is common to cooperatives elsewhere. Policies appear to be determined by the government rather than by the membership, and the cooperatives appear to function much as do other parts of the distributive machinery of the state. Apart from this the Soviet cooperatives are most impressive, with a membership of 39,000,000 in 1936 and control of about half the retail trade in rural areas.
17. Albert Rhys Williams, *The Soviets*, p. 352.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
19. Moissaye J. Olgin, *The Soul of the Russian Revolution*, pp. 379-380.
20. *Moscow Daily News*, December 29, 1932, quoted in Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization?* p. 594.
21. See, for example, Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*, pp. 514-517.
22. Chamberlin and Lyons are among the correspondents who have discussed this matter. See *Russia's Iron Age*, pp. 148-9, and *Assignment in Utopia*, pp. 573, 576.
23. Lyons, op. cit., pp. 233-4.
24. For an actual case of this sort see Moscow dispatch in *The New York Times*, November 6, 1934. The text of the law appears in *Izvestia*, June 9, 1934. See also M. Yvon, *What Has Become of the Russian Revolution*, pp. 40-1.
25. See *The New York Times*, November 21, 1938, and January 6, 1939, for a case in which an Englishman obtained the release of his Russian wife after a

spectacular illegal flight into the U.S.S.R. It should be noted, however, that the flight was undertaken only after all other efforts to obtain her release, and all his efforts to obtain a Russian visa, had failed.

26. Serge, op. cit., p. 79.
27. *The Daily Worker*, November 28, 1938, explained that there might be spies and fascist agents among them. No explanation has been made, however, for the failure of the Soviet government to admit communist workers driven from their homes in the Sudeten area and elsewhere by Hitler's advance.
28. For a full treatment of the crusade against religion see Chamberlin, *Russia's Iron Age*, pp. 311-326. For an account more sympathetic to the Soviet regime see Williams, op. cit., pp. 319-334.
29. Williams, op. cit., p. 321.
30. Moscow dispatch from Harold Denny in *The New York Times*, October 24, 1938.
31. Quoted by Williams, op. cit., p. 335. In this book, on pp. 335-349, will be found a sympathetic account of Soviet education and propaganda. For a more critical discussion of Soviet propaganda, see the chapter on "Government by Propaganda" in Chamberlin, *Russia's Iron Age*, pp. 129-151.
32. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, op. cit., p. 997.
33. Quoted by Philip E. Mosely in "Freedom of Artistic Expression and Scientific Inquiry in Russia," in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, November, 1938, pp. 254, 259. This article, which is based on a careful study of the Soviet press, contains an excellent discussion of the general problem of scientific and artistic freedom in the U.S.S.R.
34. The text of this law appears in *Izvestia*, April 8, 1935. Interestingly enough, Victor Serge reports that at the Congress of the Unitary Federation of Education, held at Angoulême, France, in August, 1935, educators with Stalinist sympathies sought to defend this law on the ground that the excellent Soviet pedagogy made children adults at the age of 12. Serge, op. cit., p. 188.
35. For a description of such methods see Lyons, op. cit., pp. 447-464. The authors have heard similar charges from a worker now in New York City. The government, needless to say, denies that any such practices existed.
36. John D. Littlepage and Demaree Bess, *In Search of Soviet Gold*, pp. 78, 81.
37. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, op. cit., p. 591. A discussion of the whole problem of the secret police will be found in the Webb volume on pp. 572-583. See also Baldwin's article on "Political Police" in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. XII, pp. 208-7. For an account of the regular judicial system of the U.S.S.R., see Harold J. Laski, *Law and Justice in Soviet Russia*.
38. For a dispassionate discussion of terror and demonstration trials in the U.S.S.R. see Hoover, "Dictators and Democracies," pp. 23-40. Verbatim reports of the principal trials have been published in English by the People's Commissariat of Justice of the U.S.S.R. See also *The Case of Leon Trotsky: Report of Hearings on the Charges made Against Him in the Moscow Trials*, by the Preliminary Commission of Inquiry headed by John Dewey.
39. *The New York Times*, January 3, 1939.
40. *Izvestia*, November 16, 1932.
41. *The New York Times*, January 9, 1939.
42. *Ibid.*, January 15 and 17, 1939.
43. *Ibid.*, December 22, 1938.
44. See, for example, the Soviet magazine *Voprosy Prosveticheniya (Trade Union Problems)*, No. 12, 1937.
45. Sir Walter Citrine, *I Search for Truth in Russia*, pp. 129-130.
46. Kliber Legay, *Un Mineur Français chez les Russes*, p. 61.
47. Sometimes norms are raised in a single industry. In January, 1939, for example, a 25 per cent rise in production before workers could get the normal wage was ordered in the machine building industry, and at the same time piece work rates were reduced by 14 per cent. See Associated Press dispatch in *The New York Times*, January 9, 1939.

48. For an official view of the Stakhanov movement see A. Lozovsky, editor, *Handbook on the Soviet Trade Unions*, pp. 30-40.
49. Florinsky, op. cit., p. 165.
50. See Yvon, op. cit., pp. 38-40. See also Legay, op. cit., discussed by Edmund Wilson in *The New Republic*, April 6, 1938, p. 265.
51. Littlepage and Bess, op. cit., pp. 198, 200.
52. Florinsky, op. cit., p. 152.
53. For a sympathetic account of Soviet trade unions by an Englishman who served as a union organizer in the U.S.S.R., see Pat Sloan, *Russia Without Illusions*, pp. 136-149.
54. Citrine, op. cit., p. 130.
55. Lozovsky, op. cit., p. 130.
56. See, for example, Serge, op. cit., pp. 15-16.
57. Lozovsky, op. cit., pp. 123-4.
58. *Bolshevik*, No. 11, June 1, 1937.
59. *Pravda*, September 30, 1937.
60. *The New York Times*, September 6, 1938.
61. Peter A. Speck, "Wage Policies of the Soviet Union," in *Monthly Labor Review*, October, 1938, pp. 740, 746.
62. For fuller discussions of women in Soviet Russia see Susan M. Kingsbury and Mildred Fairchild, *Factory, Family and Woman in the Soviet Union*, and Fannie W. Halle, *Women in the Soviet East*.
63. Legay, op. cit., p. 58.
64. Lozovsky, op. cit., p. 78.
65. Littlepage and Bess, op. cit., pp. 225-6.
66. Quoted by Dorothy Dunbar Bromley in the *New York Post*, July 5, 1938.
67. *The Chicago Daily News*, October 11, 1938. This sentence appeared also in the *New Haven Evening Register* (October 12, 1938), though it was deleted by *The New York Times*. It was Ludwig Lore who first called attention to this interesting fact in his column in the *New York Post*.
68. See, for example, *Izvestia* of October 9, 1937, with its complaint that "the bourgeois nationalists who formerly held sway in the organs of public instruction did everything they could to hamper the teaching of Russian in non-Russian schools."
69. *Pravda*, October 4, 1937.
70. For fuller discussions of the peasantry problem and of the famine see Sidney and Beatrice Webb, op. cit., pp. 258-294 and 561-572; Dean, "Industry and Agriculture in the U.S.S.R.," *Foreign Policy Reports*, June 1, 1938, pp. 70-4; and Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 66-92.
71. Baldwin, *Liberty Under the Soviets*, pp. 254-269.
72. A great amount of information on the structure of the Soviet government will be found in *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization?* by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. See also Samuel N. Harper, *The Government of the Soviet Union*.
73. Stalin, *Leninism*, Vol. I, 1928, p. 33.
74. One deputy, for example, reported that in the first year following his election he had received 4,000 letters from constituents. See Moscow dispatch in *The New York Times*, December 13, 1938.
75. Dean, "Industry and Agriculture in the U.S.S.R.," *Foreign Policy Reports*, June 1, 1938, p. 64.
76. Article entitled, "What Every Elector Should Know About the Ballot," in *Pravda*, November 21, 1937.
77. Leading editorial in *Pravda*, November 16, 1937.
78. See, for example, Moscow dispatch in *The New York Times*, December 13, 1938.
79. *Stalin on the New Soviet Constitution*, p. 23. For a defense of the one-party state by an English sympathizer, see Sloan, op. cit., pp. 176-188.
80. *The New York Times*, March 10, 1939. Denny did not inquire into the fate of the 68 alternates to the central committee also chosen in 1934. A study of their

fate by Mark Khinoy shows only eight still politically active. The remainder have died or disappeared.

81. The official record of Bolshevik history may be read in *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, authorized by the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. A more critical view of the party's history will be found in *A History of Bolshevism*, by Arthur Rosenberg. Interesting material, both on Stalin and on the Communist Party, will be found in Boris Souvarine, *Stalin: A Critical Survey of Bolshevism*. See also Florinsky, op. cit., pp. 94-113, and Harper, op. cit., pp. 51-6 and 63-73.
82. Stalin is constantly described as "the greatest genius of all times and nations." In natural science and in the arts as well as in the social sciences, a quotation from Stalin is the final answer to all argument. Speeches and articles end in lyrical praise of his wisdom and genius. Much of the treatment of him in the Russian press suggests a deity rather than a human being.
83. The Central Committee of the party, elected at the party convention in August, 1917, consisted of 24 members. Of these seven—Lenin, Sverdlov, Uritsky, Dzerzhinsky, Nogin, Shomin, and Artem—died a natural death. (Nogin, it is worth noting, was branded a traitor years after his death.) Six—Rykov, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Krestinsky, and Smilga—were executed. Sokolnikov is in prison, Bubnov and Stassova were branded traitors and have disappeared, and four—Lomov, Berzin, Muranov, and Milutin—have disappeared without a trace. Trotsky is in exile, and Joffe committed suicide in protest against the treatment accorded Trotsky. Madame Kollontai, though envoy to Sweden, is not politically active. Only Stalin is left.
- The original Politburo, elected in October, 1917, consisted of seven members—Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Trotsky, Sokolnikov, Bubnov, and Stalin. One died a natural death, two were executed, one is in jail, one has been branded a traitor and has disappeared, one is in exile, and only Stalin is left.
- The first Soviet government, elected in October, 1917, consisted of 15 People's Commissars. Four of these—Lenin, Nogin, Lunacharsky, and Stepanov—died a natural death. Rykov was executed, Krylenko and Antonov-Yevseyenko are in prison, Trotsky is in exile, and six—Milutin, Dybenko, Schlapinikov, Lomov, Thodorovich, and Glebov-Avilov—have disappeared without any official explanation. Only Stalin is left.
- (The authors are indebted to Mark Khinoy for this compilation as well as for other valuable assistance.)
84. Editorial in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in November, 1938, quoted in *The New York Times*, November 25, 1938.
85. Quoted by Strong, op. cit., pp. 96-7.

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